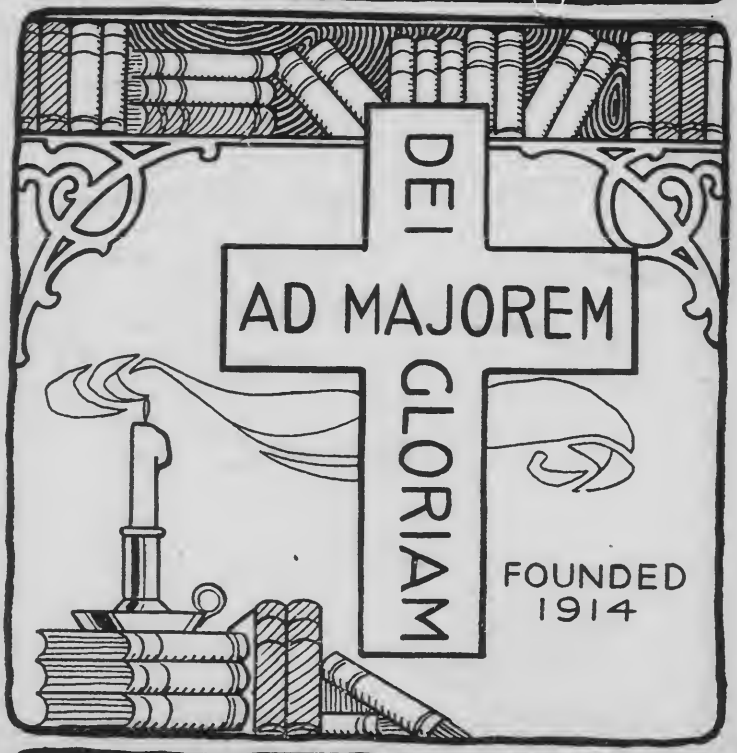
THE HISTORY OF METHODISM IN MACCLESFIELD

REV. B. SMITH.

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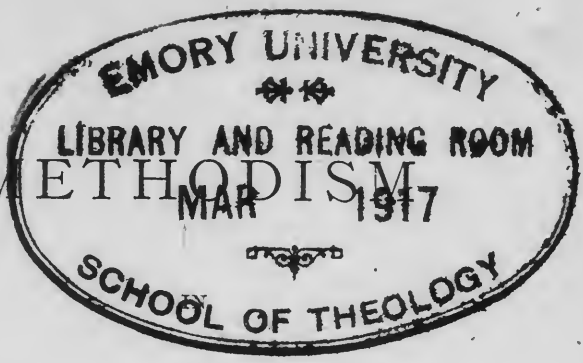
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METHODISM IN MACCLESFIELD.

BY

BENJAMIN SMITH:

AUTHOR OF "CLIMBING; A MANUAL FOR THE YOUNG"; "SUNSHINE IN THE KITCHEN"; ETC., ETC.

"AND THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH THEM: AND A GREAT NUMBER BELIEVED, AND TURNED UNTO THE LORD."

ACTS XI. 21.

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PREFACE.

METHODISM in Macclesfield deserved a history: it has furnished heroes of renown, has been distinguished by much remarkable incident, and has been adorned by characters of more than ordinary saintliness. Many regret, not without cause, that the task of tracing the narrative was not attempted earlier. When, after the Conference of 1870, these sketches were commenced, a hundred years had elapsed since Macclesfield was made the head of a Circuit. There was another period, a previous quarter of a century, which also needed to be explored. The early Methodists of Macclesfield, their children, and many of their grandchildren, had been removed to the heavenly rest. So the compiler had to use much diligence and care. There was valuable material, but it was widely scattered; many inscriptions were undecipherable; and traditions were vague and contradictory. The toiler could only do his best.

Friends are invited to view this gallery of paintings, (portrait and landscape,) and to gather such pleasure and instruction as they can. Most likely they will

find some things which will not please them, and some that will occasion surprise. Possibly, however, that which they may regard as a heedless blunder has been long and thoughtfully pondered by the writer. It is not unlikely that what is objected to might be defended; but to explain everything fully might require an additional volume, larger than the present. So let us walk along the gallery, and inspect what is to be seen.

A severe judge will affirm, perhaps, that some of the pictures are too large and that others are too small; that, in some cases, colours have been used which are too glowing, and in others shades have been introduced which are too sombre; he will be unable, it may be, to discover any sufficient reason why some portraits have been placed in conspicuous positions and others almost out of sight; he will, most likely, search in vain for some he expected to find, and may observe others which he is of opinion had better have been left undisturbed in family cabinets. Perhaps no critic will be fully satisfied. It is to be hoped, however, that the collector will obtain credit for industry and honesty of purpose.

What is of far greater importance is, that all persons interested in these memorials should emulate the excellencies here portrayed, and avoid such defects as are hinted at. Our great business is to become all that our Lord would have us to be, and accomplish all that He would have us to do. Methodism in Macclesfield was established, and has been sustained, by servants of God eminent for sanctity, love, and zeal. Let us catch their

spirit, tread in their footsteps, and extend the glorious work they loved. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.) "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews vi. 12.)

B. S.

MANCHESTER,
February, 1875.

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METHODISM

IN

MACCLESFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

PRE-METHODISTIC TIMES. 1066—1745.

DURING some years after the defeat of Harold at Hastings, the country between Chester and Macclesfield was the scene of sanguinary conflicts, and of much suffering inflicted on the Saxon inhabitants. Probably in no part of the Island was there a more determined opposition to the Norman invaders. The claim of Harold, and afterwards of his representatives, to the English crown might be very doubtful; but the Saxon chiefs knew that if Duke William secured that crown their manors would be endangered. Besides, after the battle of Hastings the widow of the ill-fated Harold fled northward to this neighbourhood, seeking the protection of her brother, a powerful Saxon earl. Under the leadership of that brother, Earl Edwin, the Saxons made strenuous efforts to drive back the invaders, but failed to do so. The result was that the country

was laid waste with fire and sword. When William afterwards caused a record to be made of the estates contained in the fair realm he had won, most of those lying between Chester and Macclesfield had to be marked in the Domesday Book as "*vasta*," without pasturage or corn, having been utterly devastated. It is probable that an ancient church at Prestbury, where the Saxons had long worshipped God, was at this time destroyed, and another at Macclesfield.

When, however, further resistance was manifestly hopeless, it was discontinued ; and when the victors were sated with revenge they adopted a policy of conciliation here as elsewhere. Gradually the Normans and Saxons became blended. Macclesfield, (then written Maxefield or Maxfield) became loyal to the existing government. As early as 1261 it was incorporated as a free borough, with sundry privileges, by the authority of Prince Edward, (afterwards Edward I.,) at that time Earl of Chester, being the eldest son of Henry the Third, then reigning. The royal Earl graciously granted to the residents at Macclesfield freedom from various dues demanded and collected by local authorities. Official parchments still exist by which such privileges were extended to the burgesses. These documents show the signature of the Town-Clerk and bear the municipal seal ; and declare that the grantee, among other immunities, had exemption from all tolls by land and by water through the entire country.

Prince Edward, however, while thus generous in giving exemption to loyal burgesses from imposts which would have enriched local dignitaries, was not unmindful of the royal purse. Hence he still required those "beloved burgesses" to grind their corn at his mill, and to bake their bread at the royal oven. Thus did

the Earl of Chester, heir-apparent to the English throne, contrive to reconcile an open-handed liberality with due regard to his own revenue.

The church of St. Michael was founded in 1278 by this prince, then Edward the First, or by his Queen Eleanor. Most likely they were united in the undertaking and in furnishing the needful supplies, the queen personally assisting at the founding.

An ecclesiastical council was held in Macclesfield by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 1332, and another in 1362.

During the residence of the Earls of Chester the town was surrounded by a wall, which had three principal gates, the sites of which seem to be indicated by the names of the three streets, Jordan Gate, Chester Gate, and Common Gate.

The name of the town, with its ancient mode of spelling, occurs in the olden ballad of Robin Hood. Will Scarlet, a relative and retainer of the outlaw, being interrogated by Robin as to his pedigree and place of abode, is represented as replying, "In Maxfield town I was born and bred."

The ancient custom of ringing the curfew-bell, at eight o'clock in the evening, as enjoined by William the Conqueror, is still regularly practised in the town. The same usage obtains in the towns of France which appertained to the duchy of Normandy. In Macclesfield the exception which the Norman rulers allowed during the Christmas season is still retained: during the festivities of that period, in those olden times, fire and light were allowed to the subject Saxons from Christmas day to Twelfth-day night inclusive. So the curfew-bell was silent throughout that season. In Macclesfield it is thus now. Was the curfew made

specially imperative in this neighbourhood because of the earnest resistance of the people here in the days of William, and the peculiar privileges received in the days of Edward?

At the battle of Cressy the Earl of Chester was in great danger of being slain by the French, but was saved through the courageous efforts of Sir Thomas Danyers, who also succeeded in rescuing the banner, and capturing the Chamberlain of France. An annuity was at once settled on him until a suitable reward could be found. Land was more plentiful in those days than now. In a short time the estate of Lyme was made over to Sir Thomas in compensation for his services. This estate soon after became vested in Sir Piers Legh, in consequence of his marriage with the heiress, and thus a family was settled in the county which long had regard to Macclesfield and its church.

In 1513, the Mayor and burgesses of the town manifested much zeal in mustering forces to accompany their Sovereign northward to fight the Scotch. The English army triumphed at the battle of Flodden Field, and the Scottish king, James, was slain with most of his nobility. But that famous battle occasioned much woe in England. It is recorded that Macclesfield could not, at the close of the municipal year, find a sufficient number of suitable men to fill up the vacancies in the corporation, so many had been slain at Flodden.

Macclesfield has a very suggestive coat of arms, a lion rampant, supporting a sheaf of corn, with the legend: — *Nec virtus, nec copia desunt*, "Neither courage nor abundance are wanting." The abundance might be obtained from the well-watered valley around the town, and certainly there was no lack of the manliness which is willing to fight; but for a season after Flodden there

must have been considerable privation and sorrow. Men and corn were alike scarce.

There had long been some external regard paid to religion. Macclesfield had for ages been part of Prestbury parish. It seems that Prestbury was a parish before William conquered at Hastings, though the church appears to have been destroyed during the time Earl Edwin and his sister contended with the invaders. Prestbury (Preast-burg, the dwelling of Priests) claimed ecclesiastical authority over a vast area. Indeed, the parish of Prestbury still embraces about thirty townships or chapelries, including Macclesfield and Bollington, and comprising more than sixty thousand acres of land. The parishes of Taxall and Gawsworth were formerly in that of Prestbury. It is recorded that about the year 1380, the privilege of burying was granted to these places, on the condition of paying a portion of the fees within a limited time to the monks of the Abbey of St. Werburgh, as rectors of the parish of Prestbury.

There is no reason to believe that these monkish rectors did more to enlighten the people over whom they claimed exclusive spiritual jurisdiction, than did the monks of other places. Here and there a gleam of light might be discernible; but, for the most part, the darkness of degrading superstition and of gross sensuality prevailed. The "key of knowledge," had been taken from the hands of the people, and was unemployed by the monks. If, in those days, a Bible existed in the Abbey of St. Werburgh, or throughout the immense area comprised in the parish of Prestbury, no trace thereof has been preserved. There was formerly a gravestone in the churchyard which bore an inscription indicative of the state in which England existed during

those middle ages, for the return of which some foolishly mourn—

> "Those goods I had whilst I did live,
> Unto four Monkes I freely give ;
> To eate and drinke, and make good cheere,
> And keep my *obite* once a year."

A lad named John Percyvall, born near Macclesfield, went in early life to London to push his fortune. He worked hard and was frugal, proved clever and successful, became a wealthy merchant, was eventually made Lord Mayor of London, and was known all over the trading world as Sir John Percyvall. He founded a Grammar School in Macclesfield, that poor lads might have opportunities more favourable than those which had been accorded to himself. The ancient school seal is oval, representing an eastern-looking schoolmaster seated on a form, holding a book on his knee with his left hand, and bearing in his right hand, in an elevated position, an immense birch-rod. He is clothed in a sort of long gown, and has a bearded face with an expression intensely pedagogic. During several generations the lads of Macclesfield were instructed concerning the praiseworthy energy and notable success of Sir John Percyvall ; and taught by some of the more sanguine of their tutors that they had only to do their utmost, and they too would rise to similar wealth and distinction. Indeed, the marvellous and true story of the Founder of the Grammar School has not yet been forgotten. But, somehow, no Macclesfield lad since then has become the Lord Mayor of London.

Religion and morality in Cheshire, as in other parts of the kingdom, were evidently at a low ebb during the government of the Stuarts. It is somewhat remarkable

that our authorised and excellent version of the Bible and "The Book of Sports," by the latter of which men were encouraged, and even commanded, to profane the Lord's Day, should both have been issued in the reign of James the First: and that zeal for the Episcopal Church, as governed by Laud, should have been thought by Charles the First consistent with the enforcement of archery, sports, and tippling on the Sabbath. Some of the clergy of Cheshire refused to read the profane and despotic orders of these successive kings, but many were glad to do so, and multitudes of laymen exulted in the license thus given.

Macclesfield seems to have needed a vigorous government in the times of the Tudors and Stuarts. We learn that in 1602, among other articles delivered into the custody of the sergeant-at-mace, was "a bridle for a curst queane:" that is, a punishment for a passionate and brawling woman. This bridle is still preserved and exhibited at the police-office, but it is now regarded as merely ornamental or antiquarian. The burgesses of olden time must have found it difficult to restrain the tempers and tongues of their wives and daughters, and must have grievously suffered therefrom, before their loving hearts would have devised such a curb for the gentler sex. There is also kept, as indicating the severe discipline of those ruder ages, a peculiar form of strait-jacket, wholly made of iron. It consists of four tiers of iron, about the thickness of a man's finger, fitted with joints, and hung together with chains. On each side are cuffs to secure the hands, which would effectually defy all efforts to escape. Any one, accused of wrong-doing in those days, whether man or woman, might well tremble when brought before the Mayor of Macclesfield. There was also another punishment com-

mon here for offending women. This was the cucking, or ducking stool. It was a wooden chair in which the culprit was placed and bound, and was then ducked in the river. This usage had not fallen into complete desuetude at the beginning of the present century. The place of the infliction was at the bottom of the "Cuck-Stool Pit Hill," the bed of the river there being flatter and deeper than at any other place in proximity to the town.

But though the municipal authorities were armed with such powers, they do not seem to have been themselves always and absolutely immaculate. For instance, the Rev. Edward Binghall, Vicar of Acton, records a circumstance, occurring in 1631, which suggests that the moral tone of Macclesfield was not very high at the time when Charles the First swayed the sceptre of these realms. Five aldermen of the town met for carousal at a tavern. That was not very creditable to those who ought to have been models to the burgesses and apprentices of the place. But it was still worse that they drank excessively of sack and *aqua-vitæ*, (sherry and brandy.) Their riotous merriment, however, after a time subsided into senseless stupefaction, and they had to be carried to their homes. Worst of all, three of them died the next day from this alcoholic poisoning; and the other two had a narrow escape, being for some time dangerously ill. The worthy vicar appends to his account of the humiliating circumstance the suitable ejaculation: "O that drunkards would learn to be wise!"

Among the many churches, as well as castles, which were injured during the wars which preceded the establishment of the Commonwealth, the church of St. Michael must be numbered. Doubtless in many cases

the church was employed by the defenders of a town or city, as a strong hold, and was therefore assailed by those who were seeking to get the mastery of the place. When Cromwell had been fully established as Protector, General Fairfax visited Macclesfield. The authorities and people have not generally been among the first to seek for a change of governors, nor among the last to submit to constituted authority. On the occasion of General Fairfax's visit he was formally received by the Mayor and burgesses, and entertained at the expense of the corporation. The cost was *one shilling and threepence.*

By this time much that belonged to the early days of Macclesfield had disappeared, while its modern enlargement had not taken place. There is reason to believe that in the days of the Plantagenets it was a fortified town, with walls and gates, but in the days of the Stuarts little was left of these defences but the name. Macclesfield Forest had been held by the Earl of Derby, as chief-ranger, on the condition that he should furnish to the king two hundred deer annually; but, however much that "merry" monarch,—and worthless,—Charles the Second, might delight in venison, as well as wine, his woodlands at Macclesfield would not provide for him as they had done for some of his royal ancestors. Dukes of Buckingham had successively held high festivity in their palace in the midst of the town; but no such state and banqueting were now beheld by its burgesses. They must be satisfied with what was provided for them by the men they chose as Mayor and aldermen. In the early part of this century the ruins of the Duke of Buckingham's baronial mansion was popularly called "The Giant's Castle."

During the Protectorate there was in succession

more than one Puritan minister, or curate, at St. Michael's church. One R. Stringer, who officiated in that church, signed the Solemn League and Covenant, and in 1657 we find that Mr. James Bradshaw preached and conducted Divine service in Presbyterian fashion within the consecrated walls. At Prestbury there was at the same time a vicar who was zealous against those rites and ceremonies in the Episcopal Church which Presbyterians held to appertain to the Romish Antichrist, and to lead Rome-ward. It was known, however, that some Papists were in Prestbury, and doubtless many other persons who longed for the restoration of the ritual of the Episcopal Church. But, for the present, an opponent of Diocesan Bishops was in authority at Prestbury. A similar state of things prevailed throughout the extensive parish, as in other parishes in England.

At this time there was in the church of St. Michael a copy of Fox's "Book of Martyrs," in black letter. It was in three volumes, and strongly bound. These volumes were placed in the church that they might be read by the people at their leisure, and were securely chained that they might not be purloined. They had been thus fastened to the reading-desk in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and were allowed to remain there, amid various changes, until the multiplication of books rendered such an arrangement altogether needless. In those days Episcopalians and Presbyterians were alike Protestants. These three volumes are still in existence, and are greatly prized.

There appears to have been great need in the vicinity of Macclesfield that the Puritan ministers should be true to their principles, and also some pleasing traces that, amid many difficulties, and hampered by some erroneous

views, they endeavoured to be thus faithful. They met together for consultation and prayer, and tried to lead their people to seek after God and the enjoyment of vital religion. A little incident which occurred in the immediate vicinity of the town will illustrate both their difficulties and their efforts. The Rev. H. Newcome was rector of Gawsworth, and much attached to his neighbours, the ministers at Macclesfield and Prestbury. One Sabbath evening Mr. Newcome was spending a short time at Lady Fytton's, one of his parishioners. There he unwillingly met a Mr. Constable, who was "a known famous epicure." Mr. Newcome's opposition to the intemperance and profanity then too prevalent were so well known, that his presence would be a great annoyance to the lover of earthly things. But they were both there, and her Ladyship appears to have wished neither to lose the good opinion of her minister, nor to offend her pleasure-seeking neighbour. As the party partook of the evening meal, Mr. Constable loudly affirmed that the ale of Broadheath was of very superior quality, and offered to send a man, who was in attendance on him, for some. The rector replied that the ale provided by their hostess was strong enough, and that he hoped that none would be sent for on the Lord's-day evening from the ale-house. For the time Mr. Newcome prevailed; but, having partaken of a little refreshment and fulfilled his duties as the pastor of that neighbourhood, he took his leave. He afterwards had the mortification to learn that, in such a home, and in the presence of a lady whom he had hoped to influence for good, the earthly-minded man, regardless of the sanctity of God's Sabbath, and unmindful of the slight thus put on the hospitality of Lady Fytton, exclaimed, "Now that he is gone, fetch in the ale."

We can perceive that in and around Macclesfield, as elsewhere, the moral and religious tone of the people, rich and poor, was low. But during the Protectorate there was considerable effort made to raise and purify that tone. The glimpses which we gain of such godly effort in this neighbourhood, though slight, are pleasing. The light was held up, and a protest entered against prevailing wickedness. Although we may discern in those who were endeavouring to approve themselves to God somewhat of human infirmity, sometimes in the form of needless scrupulosity, at other times in that of lingering superstition, or again in some degree of intolerance, we perceive a manifest abhorrence of sin and an endeavour to exalt the Saviour.

It seems that godly ministers and others were accustomed to agree with each other to seek God's blessing by special prayer at an appointed time in their own closets, or with two or three chosen friends; or at other times a disciple of Christ, unknown to others, would set apart a day for special intercession in reference to specified topics. Thus we read in their personal journals of "Private Days." Here we have an instance, with the subjects for supplication.

"PRIVATE DAY.

I. Mr. Harrison's journey.
II. Mr. Tilsley's affliction.
IV. Abigail's lingringe sickness.
V. Old Aunt Pot.
VI. Francis Corker, y^{t} hath his eys failinge."

Another entry indicates confidence in the power of prayer, with a belief in the preternatural beyond, perhaps, that which is warranted by Holy Scripture. Thus the good man makes record that in 1659, on June 13th,

he received from Mr. Hough information concerning a certain maid's sad condition at Cambridge. The unhappy young woman had by express promise sold her soul to the devil, and the day stipulated for the fulfilment of the awful contract was approaching. Union in prayer was agreed on by certain of the Puritan ministers and other godly people in and about Macclesfield, as elsewhere.

It is pleasing to find that at this time the attention of the prayerful in this county was directed towards the state of the Heathen world. The rector of Gawsworth made a collection on behalf of Eliott, the missionary to the North American Indians. Mr. Newcome, who seems himself to have contributed liberally, and to have put considerable pressure on the members of his household, as well as his congregation, succeeded in raising a little more than seven pounds.

In 1662 the act of Uniformity was signed and became law. Among the many ministers who left their homes, and gave up their livings rather than sin against their consciences, were ten from the churches and chapels within the limits of the Deanery of Macclesfield. The curate at St. Michael's was one of these ten. The little band of Presbyterian ministers who had been accustomed to meet together to take counsel how they might best diminish the profanity and intemperance around them, and promote the cause of the Redeemer, were dispersed, and, to the relief and joy of ungodly parishioners, their voices could no longer be raised in the pulpits they had for a season occupied. Many of the more piously-disposed people now walked great distances that they might still benefit by the ministrations of the pastors whom they revered and loved.

Those who objected to Episcopacy, and to the

remains of Popery which they believed were found associated with Episcopacy in the Church now established by law, must have hastened to avail themselves of the "toleration" extended to them when the last and worst of the Stuarts fled from the realm. A chapel was built in King Edward Street, though it is not known by whom, or in what circumstances. We find, however, that in 1703—the year in which the Rev. John Wesley was born—the Rev. Adam Holland, M.D., was the pastor of the church assembling in King Edward Street. The nonconformists must have been moderately strong, or their pastor popular as a preacher, or both; for in 1715 it was affirmed that Dr. Holland had five hundred hearers. Of the five hundred it is stated, with evident gratification, that "twenty were gentlemen." Two years after this worthy pastor had attained such eminence in the little corporate town, he was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Culcheth, who continued to be the pastor thirty-four years, and, while sustaining that position, witnessed the entrance of Methodism into Macclesfield.

At that time the church of St. Michael might have compared favourably with many of the Episcopal churches of England. The structure had been almost rebuilt, and greatly enlarged and improved in 1740. Some indeed might regret the removal of the lofty spire on the old structure. The minister who officiated there, the Rev. James Roe, was generally regarded as a very creditable clergyman. It is to be feared that, like too many at that time, his views of Christ's Gospel were exceedingly imperfect; his control over his own temper was deficient; and his notions respecting conformity to the world lax. Yet he seems to have lived a moral life, and to have been earnest, in his way, in

seeking the welfare of his parishioners. As the population probably did not exceed six thousand, including a few Papists, who had their own room, they were moderately well provided for, so far as space and the form of godliness went. Some doubtless possessed the power also.

Two or three jottings of a secular kind may not be altogether irrelevant, as they assist us in forming a correct notion of the Macclesfield which Mr. Wesley was accustomed to visit.

About 1725, the year in which Mr. John Wesley was ordained deacon, and began to keep a religious diary, that he might thus be assisted in living a godly life, the burgesses of Macclesfield succeeded in obtaining an Act of Parliament in favour of their silk buttons. By that Act all persons throughout the kingdom were prohibited from wearing buttons made from material similar to the coat. The cunning button-makers thought that the sale of their wares would thus be vastly increased, and their profits proportionally augmented. Unfortunately for their clever scheme, Englishmen generally regarded it as manifestly absurd and unjust, and so the Act, which had been secured at great expense, was speedily repealed. Worse than this was in store. A Mr. Taylor of Birmingham, invented a metal button, plated and gilt, which looked so smart, and wore so well, that it needed no legislation to enforce its use. So the silk buttons of Macclesfield were in less demand than ever. The working-men of the town were of course greatly enraged. But after grumbling at the metal article for some time, they took to wearing it, and long retained its use, deeming no man to be in the fashion, or worthy of being looked at, who did not wear a coat of lively colour set off by gilt buttons.

In 1729, the year in which Mr. Wesley joined the little Society at Oxford, then consisting of four members, the Mayor of Macclesfield, with the hearty concurrence of the corporation, compelled their neighbours at Congleton to pay "pickage and toll" when transacting business with them. Whereupon the Mayor of Congleton retaliated. After a time it was discovered that in consequence of such retaliation, and also the frequent evasion of the imposts, and of quarrels, involving loss of time, temper, and money, the burgesses of both towns, were worse off than they had previously been. So, in February, 1730, they mutually agreed to abolish "all pickage, toll, and other dues," and allow each other to go free.

At the time Mr. Wesley was in the habit of regularly visiting Macclesfield, wages were much lower than at present; and the price of provisions was also lower. Mill-men and stewards received seven shillings, and women three shillings and sixpence a week. Children, who were hired for a period of three years, received during the first year sixpence, during the second ninepence, and during the third, one shilling a week. Butter was sold in Macclesfield at fourpence, best cheese at twopence-halfpenny, and prime beef at twopence, a pound. Mutton and veal were sold by the joint. Brown bread was a penny-farthing a pound, fine flour one shilling a peck, and milk cost one penny a quart. We must bear in mind the rate of wages when we compare the givings of our fathers and mothers in Israel and our own. The penny a week and shilling a quarter, to a working man and his wife, might then require some little self-denial.

CHAPTER II.

SHRIGLEY-FOLD—1745—1747.

ON Friday, November 8th, 1745, about mid-day, the Rev. John Wesley preached "near Maxfield." There is sufficient reason to believe that neither Mr. Wesley, nor any person acting under his direction, had previously proclaimed the Gospel message in the immediate vicinity of that town. We may, therefore, fairly regard that mid-day service as a starting-point for our history of Methodism in Macclesfield. We do so without forgetting or ignoring the preparatory work which had for some time been proceeding in the neighbourhood. Selecting that visit as the beginning of Wesleyan Methodism in the locality, we inquire somewhat carefully concerning it.

About two miles from Macclesfield, in the township of Hurdsfield, at a dwelling known as "Shrigley-fold," then occupied by Mary Aldersley, there had been, during some few years, religious services held. It was known to many that Mary Aldersley and some of her friends were accustomed to meet together for prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and religious converse; and that sometimes a preacher from a distance was present. This was done without any sanction from the vicar of Prestbury, the highest ecclesiastical authority in these parts, or even that

of the "prime curate" at Macclesfield, who held a subordinate jurisdiction. It was not clear that those who thus worshipped at Shrigley-fold had any connection with the clerical members of "the Godly Club," formerly associated at Oxford, and now scattered throughout the country. But the nickname which had been conferred on the scrupulous pietists at the University had been found convenient by those who wished to express contempt and dislike of godliness, concerning which they knew but little. So the little company assembling at Mary Aldersley's were already known as "Methodists."

John Bennet, of Chinley, who now did little else but preach, but who was as yet most widely known as "the Macclesfield and Sheffield carrier," was probably the chief preacher at Shrigley-fold. Most likely, David Taylor, sometime chaplain to Lady Betty Hastings, but now preaching in an irregular manner, had been taken by Bennet to the place, as it was under Mr. Taylor's preaching that he had been awakened. Then it is likely that, occasionally, some of the few Methodists who had begun to exhort sinners to flee from the wrath to come reached Mary Aldersley's house. It is certain that the repute of this irregular place of worship had spread to a considerable distance. We learn that in 1743, two full years before Mr. Wesley's visit, a band of earnest inquirers, headed by two young men named Pedley and Buckley, were accustomed to walk twelve miles, from Astbury, near Congleton, to the Fold, and then twelve miles back, counting not the effort too great, since at Mary Aldersley's they could hear the glad tidings of a full, free, and present salvation.

It is also on record that during the Spring of 1745, the year in which, in November, Mr. Wesley preached near Macclesfield, an announcement was made by Mary

to the little congregation in her house, that the Rev. John Wesley was expected to preach in a few days at the house of Roger Moss, near Rode-Hall. Of the company then assembled at Shrigley-fold, several went to hear Mr. Wesley at Roger Moss's house. The sermon on that occasion was from the words, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii. 23.) At the close of the service Mr. Wesley announced that he intended to preach again at five o'clock next morning. Those who were of Mary's company were perplexed. Hear Mr. Wesley again they must: walk to their homes and back before five in the morning they could not. The difficulty was overcome by Roger Moss giving them permission to sit by his fire all night. Some of them had brought small religious books in their pockets, so they had a "glorious time," reading, and talking, and praying, until morning. Then they again heard the man of God, and, about six o'clock, started homeward with their day's work to enter upon.

We can now have little doubt that the place "near Maxfield" where Mr. Wesley preached was Shrigley-fold. There was no Methodist in the town, and no other preaching place than Mary Aldersley's in the neighbourhood. Very likely, Mary and her friends interceded with Mr. Wesley on the occasion of their meeting at Roger Moss's house. The sight of the little company of weary yet happy pedestrians, their mode of spending the night to ensure another sermon, the circumstance that "Thomas Buckley's wife," one of the band, had carried her youngest child, eight months old, that she might share the privilege, and the hope of extending a good work already begun, would render their request irresistible. Probably Mr. Wesley then promised to visit the little company as soon as possible.

In 1744 Mr. Wesley had devoted a day, Thursday, June 14th, to the district which was then beginning to be known as "John Bennet's Round." He preached on that day in three counties, having started from a fourth. This was a somewhat remarkable feat, considering that the journeying was done on horseback. He left Birstal, in Yorkshire, early in the morning,—too early, we may suppose, for the five o'clock preaching. At eleven he preached in Lancashire; at Woodley, in Cheshire, in the afternoon; and at Chinley, in Derbyshire, in the evening. Early the next morning he preached again at Chinley, making four sermons in the twenty-four hours. In the May following he devoted two entire days to Lancashire and Cheshire, preaching in "several places." On neither of these occasions is the name of Macclesfield mentioned, nor is there sufficient evidence that he really did then preach nearer to that town than at Chinley and Woodley. But those visits to the neighbourhood would no doubt be much talked about, and a desire to hear him would be awakened in many. Although Shrigley-fold is a lonely place, and must then have been specially so, yet Mary Aldersley would have no difficulty in getting a congregation.

When, in November 1745, Mr. Wesley preached near Macclesfield, the times were very eventful. The Jacobites were rising in the North, with the hope of placing the Pretender on the throne, and the whole country was agitated by the dread of civil war. Among other charges preferred against Mr. Wesley was one suggested by the general panic, namely, that he was a Jacobite in disguise. A gentleman residing in the neighbourhood had published a letter in which, to his own satisfaction, he proved this, with the additional cir-

cumstance that Mr. Wesley was at that very time with Prince Charles Edward in Edinburgh. This poor man, (Dr. C——), little thought that though Mr. Wesley had lately been in the North of England, where he had suggested to magistrates and other officials what he thought would be of great service in the crisis, he was now in Cheshire, and not far from his house. Just before Mr. Wesley took horse for his appointment near Macclesfield, he penned a little information and good advice to his calumniator, and recorded in his Journal, "I wrote him a few lines. It may be, he will have a little more regard to truth, or shame, for the time to come."

The times were indeed exciting and alarming. It was generally believed that the rebels were preparing to march southward, and also that they would prove exceedingly exacting and cruel. It would be difficult to say whether they were most dreaded as Highlanders or as Papists. Nor were the fears thus aroused altogether unfounded. In less than a month after Mr. Wesley preached for the first time near Macclesfield, the Pretender and his forces actually entered the usually quiet town. A Sunday was rendered painfully memorable by the followers of "the Prince," Highlanders and others, being quartered on the burgesses. The alarm proved to have been reasonable, and Mr. Wesley knew it to be so. Yet he seems to have been somewhat annoyed by a system of patrol which must have been as vexatious as useless. At each end of the country villages watchmen were appointed to stand, relieving each other so that the guard should be maintained night and day. These, no doubt, quickly retreated to their dwellings when the van-guard of the foe appeared. But, while no enemy was near, each traveller was required to stop, and to answer such questions as the watchers saw fit to

put. Mr. Wesley was tired of being asked "Who are you? Where do you come from? Whither are you going? What is your business?" and such like queries. Precious time was wasted, and no good purpose served. The patrols in Cheshire seem to have been specially inquisitive. Mr. Wesley speaks of "many interruptions in the way, by those poor tools of watchmen, who stood with great solemnity at the end of almost every village." He was, however, allowed to journey on towards Macclesfield, and, after his first sermon in the vicinity, to proceed southward towards London.

In the year following, 1746, Methodism made its first conquest among the burgesses of Macclesfield. Once again the little company assembled at Shrigley-fold. On this occasion they had invited their acquaintances to accompany them, for a preacher was expected. Those who would have been unwilling that the thoughtless and ungodly should listen to their own narration of religious experience, were very desirous that they should hear the message of mercy and the call to repentance. The preacher's name is not recorded on earth. Possibly he then thought that he had "laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought." But he was, by the blessing of God, assisting in kindling a light which was long to shine. Henceforth, in one of the dwellings in Macclesfield there was to be a lighted candle, giving light to those who dwelt in that house, and speedily shining far beyond its narrow precincts. Though the preacher's name is unknown to us, the text he employed has been recorded. It was the solemn declaration:—"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death." (Prov. xiv. 32.) There was at that service one who was not yet num-

bered among the praying company. He probably did not then know the name of the preacher, and might not like to take the liberty of asking, for he was a poor man, and illiterate, and was then of a sorrowful spirit. He most likely left Shrigley-fold silent, and dejected, and alone. But the text he certainly never forgot, nor the message which God that day by the lips of His servant spake unto his soul.

The name of this serious inquirer, now thoroughly awakened by the Spirit of God, was George Pearson. He was a resident in Macclesfield, living in "The Waters," a part of the town through which the river Bollin ran, and which was liable to inundation from its depressed position. It was covered with grass, and called Waters Green, to distinguish it from Parsonage Green. Pearson was already about twenty-eight years old, was married, and had a small family. By trade he was a tailor. In early life he must have had few advantages, as he was unable to write his own name or even to read. Possibly his parents had been in such straitened circumstances that they could neither afford to pay for his schooling, nor dispense with such wages as he could earn. There had, as yet, been no enactments to ensure for the children of poor men short hours of labour and good instruction. Probably George might have been sent to a Sunday-school, had there been any such institution in Macclesfield; but at the time of his childhood there was no Sabbath-school in the town, nor in any other place in Great Britain or elsewhere. Before his life closed, Macclesfield took a distinguished place in reference to education: at a subsequent period, when many important towns and cities in England were still doing little for the right training of the youth belonging to the labouring classes, Royal

Commissioners recorded that ninety-eight per cent. of its population could read, and suggested that the two per cent. who were illiterates must be the children of strangers. In later days, alas, there has been some decline in this respect. Extreme and long-continued depression of trade compelled thousands who had been taught in Macclesfield to seek homes elsewhere. On the return of prosperity their places were largely supplied by those who had not spent their childhood in the town: the formation of railways, too, has fostered the love of change, so that few towns can long remain much above the level of powerful neighbours; and, possibly, there may be other causes for the partial deterioration to which we have referred. When George Pearson, however, was a little boy, the burgesses of Macclesfield, were, like other Englishmen, generally heedless concerning the education of poor men's children. The Grammar school had been monopolised by a favoured class. So it came to pass that at the time when George ought to have been at school, he was idling about the streets and lanes, until he was thought capable of taking a place on the board in a tailor's workshop. At the period when he was awakened by the sermon heard at Shrigley-fold, there is reason to believe that he was expert with his needle, but he knew nothing respecting the use of the pen; and was a stranger to literature, even the Bible itself being to him a sealed book.

The penitent inquirer was not left long in darkness. There were those accustomed to worship at Mary Aldersley's who had themselves found Christ; and, though they might be unable to preach, they could assist a contrite sinner. They could tell "what great things the Lord had done for them," and how He had

had compassion on them. They could explain to the sorrowful one the nature of saving faith. Especially could the little band at Shrigley-fold unite in prayer for and with an awakened sinner. So George Pearson was soon brought into the liberty of God's children, rejoicing in conscious pardon and renewal. Henceforth the means of grace were unspeakably precious to him. He emulated the few who had come to the "Fold" from beyond Congleton. Many and long were the pilgrimages made by the new convert during the next few months in order to listen to the Gospel message, or take part in love-feast or prayer-meeting. In these journeyings he was accompanied, sometimes by one Samuel Rowbottom, or other Christian disciples.

As was natural, George Pearson became anxious that there should be Methodist preaching and other means of grace established in the town in which he lived. So far from regarding Shrigley-fold as too far for himself, he was accustomed to walk ten, fifteen, or even twenty miles, that he might hear a sermon or testify of the grace of God. But he had a wife and some little children who were very dear to him. These might walk up the hills to Mary Aldersley's when the weather was moderately favourable, and they were in good health. So they did. Mrs. Pearson, on these occasions, carried her youngest child in her apron, after a fashion which is often alluded to among the Methodistic traditions of the neighbourhood; but of the exact mode no representation has been handed down. But the weather was, of course, uncertain. Besides, the preachers did not often come even so near Macclesfield. If there could be Divine service, as held by the Methodists, established in the town, George and his family would derive advantage, and their neighbours and friends might be induced to

avail themselves of such opportunity of hearing the Gospel.

In the May following the memorable visit to Shrigley-fold, George ascertained that the Methodists of Manchester were likely to have a high day, unless the rioters should disturb them. John Nelson was to be there, and also Mr. Wesley himself. George's mind was soon made up. He resolved to see Manchester that day, and also lay the case of Macclesfield before Mr. Wesley. True, Manchester was a long way from his door-step, and, if he went, he must walk. But for such toil he was fully prepared. He had never expected to be carried to heaven in a chariot, nor to tread the path to it daintily in silver slippers. He would be content if, anyhow, he could have "hope in his death," and enter the glorious "city." Neither hand-loom weaver, nor button-maker, nor tailor, had then much chance to ride in a coach: what were their legs intended for, but to use in walking? Besides, it was the pleasant month of May, with its abundant daylight. If he started at day-break and travelled back in the night, he need only lose one day's wage.

At one o'clock in the afternoon many were waiting for Mr. Wesley in Manchester. The Methodists had already secured a preaching-room, somewhere near the river, small, inconvenient of access, and far out of the way of "respectability." Near to this place the crowd had gathered, but Mr. Wesley had not yet come. He had been preaching, it seems, that morning, miles away, in Rosendale. He was not, however much behind the time appointed, and probably would have arrived sooner, had he known that it had been announced for him to preach. Ten times as many people were present as could have crowded into the diminutive and queer-

looking room which was the only Methodist place of worship then in Manchester. So Mr. Wesley moved on, and the crowd, preceding and following, moved on also. Nine years before that day Mr. Wesley had tried, in the church at Salford, to preach salvation by faith in a crucified Saviour when he was himself only seeking such salvation. He has not recorded any intervening visit to Manchester. There was now no welcome to the church; but the love of God, and the joy of conscious pardon, were in his heart. So he walked along, until he arrived at Salford Cross. Then, reminding such as had been in the church, on the previous occasion, of that visit, he began to offer salvation, such as he had since obtained, to all around him, preaching from the words "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." For a long time it seemed as though there was no disposition whatever in the Manchester crowd to emulate the proceedings of the Staffordshire rioters. At length, however, a man of burly dimensions and fierce countenance thrust himself forward, leading on a few others, and called aloud, "Bring out the engine." A tumult seemed likely; but Mr. Wesley merely removed into an adjacent enclosure, and there finished his discourse in peace.

When the service was over, George Pearson introduced himself to Mr. Wesley, and began to plead the cause of poor, neglected, and needy Macclesfield. Why should not the people there be favoured like those of Manchester, and Burslem, and elsewhere? Of course there was no opportunity for preaching at St. Michael's; but in front of his house there was as nice a green to preach on as any in England. With the town rising behind, and the amphitheatre of beautiful hills before, and a crowd of Macclesfield folk, immortal as men

anywhere, around, any preacher would be moved to do his best for his Master. Of course, if the servants of God came, they would need something to eat, and shelter for the night. George had no authority from Mayor or alderman to offer fitting hospitality; but there was a small house in "The Waters" where they would be welcome. Though the house was little, and the family becoming numerous, and the stores not always abundant, there would be what was needful. Possibly, in time, some rich man would offer better accommodation. When, a few months before this visit to Manchester, the soldiers of King George passed through Macclesfield in pursuit of the young Pretender and his Scotch rebels, there had been no lack of supplies. The burgesses gladly provided both for officers and soldiers. The Duke of Cumberland was entertained by Mr. Stafford, the Town-Clerk, in Jordan Gate. Indeed, to tell the whole truth, the rebels themselves had no reason to complain of the town while their faces were towards the Metropolis; for the people, though loyal to the house of Brunswick, and zealous for the Protestant religion, were naturally unwilling to give offence to men who carried dangerous weapons, and those Highlanders looked uncommonly fierce. So the Pretender was allowed to take possession of the Grammar School for the night. A time might arrive when a Methodist preacher would be as well cared for as the soldiers of Prince Charles, or even as those of King George. Meanwhile they should have such accommodation as his house provided.

No doubt George Pearson was a happy man as he trudged homeward on that Thursday night. It would indeed seem to him to be the "merry month of May." He had spoken to Mr. Wesley himself, and had been

favourably received. Arrangements were to be made for "poor Macclesfield." Methodist preachers should visit the town, and stay at his house. He wished that he could provide for them better. There were, in the ancient borough, respectable inns where travellers, who had money in their pockets, could enjoy luxuries of which George only dimly conceived. But these preachers were generally in the position of Peter and John when the former declared, "Silver and gold have I none," and their host expectant was in similar plight. But they would read and pray with his wife and children, and he could ask them to explain what was to him difficult. These men of God would gladly talk with them of Divine things.

As an earnest of future privileges, Mr. Wesley himself would visit Macclesfield on the very next Sunday. When George arrived at his home, Friday would have already commenced. There would not be much time: he must send word to Mary Aldersley, and she would spread the tidings all about her; he and his wife could publish the news in the town. "Mr. Wesley will preach in 'The Waters,' somewhere in front of my house, next Sunday, about twelve o'clock, or as soon as the people come out of the church." That was the proclamation to be made; and George would have enough to do during his journey to arrange how it could be most effectually made, not forgetting to thank the Lord that He had thus favoured them, and to pray that the visit of His servant, though very short, might be the occasion of wide-spread and abiding good. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth!" Thus George Pearson felt concerning the servants of Christ.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSECRATED STABLE. 1747–1750.

THE congregation was leaving St. Michael's church after forenoon service, when the Methodists from far and near were assembling in the vale immediately beneath, called "The Waters." There, in front of George Pearson's house, the clergyman who was regarded as the very ringleader of this "new sect" was about to preach. It was generally understood that he did not appear abroad in this way during church hours, and that, in this respect, he was very strict with his "Helpers." Whatever leaning to Dissent any of these might have, they must not place their ministrations in competition with the services appointed to be held in any parish church. It was also affirmed that Mr. Wesley was himself a regular and devout attendant on the Church services, and hence some might suppose that he would be seen in the congregation at St. Michael's. On this occasion, however, he neither preached in church hours, nor attended Divine service in any building episcopally consecrated. Possibly, George Pearson's visit to Manchester on the preceding Thursday may have caused him to fail in taking part in the responses of the Prayer Book on this Sabbath. It is not unlikely that the preaching on "The Waters" necessitated the

spending that time in travelling which might have been intended for worship in Congleton or Macclesfield church. As it was, Mr. Wesley had preached twice, at Astbury and Congleton Cross, before, in all probability, any text had been announced in any church in the kingdom ; and then during the forenoon took refreshment and rest, and also found his way to Macclesfield.

That visit of Mr. Wesley on the 10th of May, 1747, would seem very short to poor George. The inquirer after Divine things had much to learn ; and, if Methodism was to take root in the town, its first convert needed much counsel. Had it been known how brief the visit would be, and what a length of time would elapse before the great evangelist would again enter Macclesfield, his friends would scarcely have hoped for much from his influence, and the enemies of Methodism would not have greatly feared. Mr. Wesley had to preach at Woodley Green that same evening ; so Macclesfield had only such time as could be given on a day when four sermons must be preached, each one at a different place, and at a considerable distance from each other. Accordingly, having proclaimed his Divine Master to a crowd, and invited sinners, weary and perishing, to come to Him, the Friend of sinners, our Founder rode on to Woodley Green, not, as it proved, to re-enter Macclesfield during the ensuing twelve years. It would seem that the visit, so transient yet memorable, must have been introduced, at George Pearson's earnest entreaty, into a day already arranged for.

We discern a wisdom and power far beyond what is human, in the raising up of suitable agents for establishing and extending the work of God in the different parts of our country. Mr. Wesley, and his ministerial coadjutors, could only visit the Societies occasionally.

They went where it seemed they were needed most: but the Lord provided helpers by whom His own gracious purposes were accomplished. Instead of the spark in Macclesfield being extinguished because Mr. Wesley during the space of twelve years could find no opportunity for re-visiting the town, it was to be cherished, and fanned into a flame. When he next did preach there, he found both Society and "meeting-house," though neither existed when he took his stand in front of George Pearson's dwelling. "And Jesus said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." (Mark iv. 26—29.) It is man's province to toil, and his privilege to derive large blessing as the result, yet is he constantly reminded of his entire and ceaseless dependence on God.

About this time the Methodists of Macclesfield began to assemble for worship and Christian fellowship in an outbuilding, which they rented with this design. Tradition affirms that the building thus consecrated for sacred purposes had been previously used as a stable. It stood at a considerable distance from the centre of the little town, out of sight of the sensitive and "respectable," being situated beyond "Temple Bar," and near the Common Gate. It was somewhat in the direction of Shrigley-fold, near the Buxton road, and not far from George Pearson's house in "The Waters." Now that Macclesfield was to become the centre of Methodism for the neighbourhood, it was suitable that the place of worship should be as accessible as possible to Mary

Aldersley in whose house the "ark" had long abode. But we may safely conclude that little of mere sentiment entered into the arrangement. The outbuilding, from its situation, was likely to be seen by some of the Methodists as they went to the "Fold;" they would perceive that it was unoccupied; and the rent of such a place would be within their reach. What alteration and purification was needful, they would doubtless be able to manage among themselves. At any rate we learn nothing concerning the opening services, distinguished strangers, vast congregations, or liberal collections. Those concerned took the stable and began thankfully to worship therein, pleading their Lord's gracious declaration concerning His presence wheresoever two or three are assembled together.

Henceforth then, for a time, the centre of Macclesfield Methodism was a stable. Probably to those who worshipped there the structure was not all that they desired, but it was such as in the Providence of God they had been able to secure. So they must be grateful, and persevere in toil and prayer, and wait. Such meanness of accommodation was not unknown in the annals of Christianity: it was in a lowly building that our Saviour was born, and in structures and places very rude that the early Christians worshipped. George Pearson, during his recent visit to Manchester, possibly saw the crazy old chamber in which the Methodists of that town still assembled. True that they had begun to talk of building a "preaching-room" for their exclusive use, but they had not yet done so. The few in Macclesfield could talk, and plan, and hope. Meanwhile the old stable would shelter them in stormy weather from wind and rain, and hail and snow; and would provide a snug place for their class-meetings.

When they had a preacher, and the weather proved favourable, there was abundance of room outside.

About this time George Pearson became a Class-leader. It is probable that he derived his authority direct from Mr. Wesley himself, on the occasion of his visit in May, 1747. The appointment would be very simple. "Take this ruled paper, and God's blessing, and raise a class as soon as you can." In our days such a man might be thought scarcely qualified for the office, and there can be no doubt that some attainments which Mr. Pearson did not possess would have been useful. He was unable to read, write, or keep accounts, so that he would need some help, if the attendance of the members must be registered. Then he had enjoyed personal religion but a short time, and had not heard many Gospel sermons. He had not been early instructed either in a godly home or a Sabbath-school concerning Scriptural religion. He could derive no information from the Bible or any good book. But he had been truly converted, was walking closely with God, and was animated by a burning zeal for the Lord Jesus, mingled with yearning compassion for souls. Besides, the choice rested between him who knew as yet but little and a very few others who knew less. In such cases we know well how Mr. Wesley was accustomed to act. He did the best he could in the circumstances, by appointing the man, and watching the result as carefully as was practicable. Anyhow, Mr. Pearson soon became a Leader. So far as can now be ascertained, the first class in Macclesfield consisted of five persons,—namely, George Pearson, David Pickford, Abraham Law, John Brown, and Stephen Wadsworth.

It may be asked, to what Circuit did Macclesfield belong during the period that the Methodists of the

town worshipped in the transformed out-house? To this question it is not easy to give a very definite reply. Probably George Pearson himself, at the very time, would scarcely have been prepared to tell his friends what Circuit, or "Round," they were in.

At the date Mr. Wesley for the first time preached near Macclesfield, the town must have been regarded as included in "the York Round," if a place which had not yet been visited by any preacher acting under the direction of the Wesleys, nor likely to be so visited for the present, could be regarded as attached to a "Round." The district of country to be visited and evangelized by the men who were supposed to make "York" their head-quarters, comprised six counties, namely, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. It is evident therefore that Macclesfield was, at that time, in the "Round" just named, though probably not even Mary Aldersley herself was aware of the fact.

In 1749 the names of the Circuits were, for the first time, published in the "Minutes." In England there were then twenty Circuits. One of these was designated the "Cheshire" Circuit. As there is no mention of Lancashire, nor of any town in that county, such as Manchester or Liverpool, it is not improbable that Lancashire was then included in the Cheshire Circuit. Doubtless Macclesfield was for the time so included. But these arrangements and boundaries were for some years liable to frequent change.

At the Conference of 1749 complaints were alleged against "the Assistants" generally. Among other shortcomings with which they were charged was neglecting to visit the classes for the renewal of the Quarterly tickets. So long as a Circuit included two

or three counties, such omissions could scarcely be wondered at. The Assistants had also been directed to provide for every preacher a private room and a bed to himself; yet, in some instances, they had failed to make such provision. It is not improbable that the Assistant who had charge of the Cheshire Circuit would find difficulty in attending to this direction in the case of Macclesfield. George Pearson was glad to receive the preachers to his humble dwelling, and to extend to them a generous hospitality. This he did for several years, until God in His providence raised up others who were able and willing to receive Christ's servants to their homes. But, large as was the heart of Mr. Pearson, it remains a question whether he could provide what the rule required, and what was certainly desirable. His family was becoming numerous, and the rooms in his house were few. The welcome however was hearty.

One circumstance respecting Mr. Pearson's hospitality to Mr. Wesley, and the latter's appreciation thereof, has been handed down. So far as can be traced, it occurred on the occasion of the first visit to the town itself, in 1747. After preaching in "The Waters," and before riding on towards Woodley Green, the preacher would need refreshment. There was then but the one home in Macclesfield where he would be welcomed, and there was such a dinner set before him as, it is pretty certain, was not often seen in the worthy tailor's house. A leg of mutton had been provided. Mr. Wesley would readily discern the loving generosity indicated by such provision. There was honour done to Christ in the person of His servant. Mr. Wesley first of all asked a blessing, and then, raising his hands as if in pleasant astonishment, with a smiling countenance uttered words which were never forgotten by the

hostess, who had had the anxiety of entertaining such a guest, nor by the noble-minded man who, in his penury, had purchased the joint: "Why," said he, "here is a dinner fit for a prince!"

Mr. Christopher Hopper seems to have been the first of the Itinerant Preachers who, after Mr. Wesley, visited Macclesfield. His entrance on the work was rough indeed. Having narrated his conversion to God through the instrumentality of Mr. Wesley and other zealous servants of Christ, Mr. Hopper writes,—

"The spring following, in the year 1749, I began teaching a school near Hindley-hill. But the work of God so increased in my hands, that I could not properly attend it: therefore, in the latter end of the year, I gave it up, with all other secular employments, and cast myself on the bounty of my Lord and Master.

"I well remember, once on the top of a cold mountain in a violent storm of snow, when the congealed flakes covered me with a white mantle, Satan assaulted me, and pushed me hard to return to my school, or some other business to procure bread. I staggered through unbelief, and almost yielded to the tempter. But, as the attack was sudden, so the battle was soon over. The Lord sent these words to my heart like lightning: 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing, Lord.' (Luke xxii. 35.) I answered with a loud voice, 'Nothing, Lord! Nothing, Lord!' All my doubts and fears vanished in a moment, and I went on my way rejoicing.

'Constrained to cry by love Divine,
My God, Thou art for ever mine!'"

Since that time I have been richly supplied with all good things. This day I am full. I have all, and abound. Praise God and the Lamb for ever!

"I preached at Birstal, on the top of the hill, before the foundation of the preaching-house was laid. Large congregations attended, and the power of the Lord was present to heal. I rode on to Halifax, and found their little Society at Skircoat-green. God gave us a blessing. I then rode to Rochdale, and preached in the evening at the widow Whitaker's, to as many as the house could contain. They were turbulent enough; but we were not afraid; for God was with us. Next day I rode to Manchester, and preached that evening in a little garret by the river-side. The congregation multiplied every meeting. On the Sabbath-day the whole place could not contain them. The multitude was impatient to hear. The old wooden house shook under us, and put the congregation into confusion. Many trembled, and some believed. The next evening they procured me a Baptist meeting-house. The place was crowded. They heard with attention. Many were awakened and joined themselves to seek and worship God. They immediately bought a piece of ground, and laid the foundation of their first preaching-house. I rode through Cheshire."

It is probable that it was during this tour "through Cheshire" that Mr. Hopper had the honour to preach where none of his brethren, employed by the Wesleys, had preceded him, and that he would find the Methodists of Macclesfield assembling in the old stable, or beneath the canopy of heaven, as circumstances dictated. Coming, however, from the garret in Manchester, he would not be shocked at the stable. There was one advantage in the latter, it was on a sure foundation, being on the ground and not shaking on the verge of a river. Most likely, however, Mr. Hopper preached in the open air. Public attention was being called to "this sect," and

people would flock to hear one who, though not a clergyman, was constantly employed in expounding the doctrines which were so much opposed by many of the learned, yet so warmly espoused by multitudes. We may suppose that Mr. Hopper would only use the stable as a place wherein he could meet the Society, or give counsel to the awakened, or unite in prayer with both these classes of people. His name has, however, been handed down by sufficient authority, as the first of Mr. Wesley's itinerants whose voice was heard in Macclesfield proclaiming "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

About the year 1750, perhaps a little earlier, John Nelson visited those parts. On account of his holy zeal, and large success in many places, and of the share he had in establishing Methodism in Cheshire, his name must never be forgotten by Macclesfield Methodists. His Journal is one of the most deeply-interesting pieces of autobiography in the English language. It has been read with advantage by godly people during one century, and will be read by such people in future generations. He was born in the parish of Birstal, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in 1707. His father was a mason, and the lad John was trained to the same craft. When between nine and ten years old, he was greatly affrighted with thoughts concerning death and judgment, but found no one to lead him to the Lord Jesus. Several years indeed passed after that date before the Wesleys themselves found salvation; and at Birstal there were none to lead the mason's little lad to Christ. Eventually, as he narrates, he was brought to the Saviour, chiefly through the preaching of the Rev. John Wesley. Soon after John Nelson had obtained the pearl of great price, he began to commend it to

others, and in the course of his apostolic labours he entered Cheshire. There he found unlooked-for difficulties. Some who had been very zealous in preaching Christ had imbibed such extreme Calvinistic views, and such intense prejudice against the Wesleys, that no preacher of universal redemption, and no associate of Mr. Wesley, was acknowledged by them as a minister of the Gospel. John Nelson records, "As Mr. Bennet and I went over Stanedge, we met David Taylor, who had got so much into the 'poor sinnership' that he would scarcely speak to me. He called Mr. Bennet to a distance, and said he was sorry he was going to take me into Derbyshire; for I was so full of law and reason, that I should do a great deal of hurt wherever I preached." Mr. Nelson succeeded for a time in preserving Mr. Bennet from separating from Mr. Wesley, and perhaps had much to do with preventing his ever being fully carried away by the extravagant notions which poor David Taylor, to whom Bennet was so much indebted, yielded himself. Those were unsettled times. Men distinguished the lessons of Divine truth very imperfectly. Many who were the most zealous in the promotion of what they regarded as God's cause, adopted strange opinions which in the minds of their less godly followers produced much hurtful fruit.

John Nelson had to encounter other difficulties in those regions besides John Bennet's hesitation and David Taylor's declared hostility. He had met with much persecution in his native county, and the enmity of the carnal mind was made apparent in the Midland counties as in Yorkshire. At Acomb near York, he had nearly lost his life; and, when in "John Bennet's Round," he was often in considerable danger.

The Yorkshire evangelist was on one occasion

commencing a public service at Monyash, in the Peak of Derbyshire. A few pious people were uniting with him in singing a hymn, when a rabble of drunken men, chiefly workers in the adjacent lead-mines, approached with hostile intent. The tipsy mob was headed by the clergyman, to whom they looked for guidance. As the worshippers endeavoured to sing the praises of the Most High, their clerical antagonist began to halloo and shout, as if hunting with a pack of hounds. This bellowing was continued during the singing of the hymn. When John Nelson began to pray, the clergyman, perhaps supposing that the preacher and his Methodist friends would now have their eyes shut, endeavoured to overturn the chair on which Mr. Nelson was standing. He succeeded in breaking off one of the arms of the chair, but failed in his purpose of upsetting the preacher. Mr. Nelson at length began to preach, and the parson was still more exasperated. Of what use would all the ale or brandy be, if his parishioners were merely led by himself to hear the Methodist's heretical and schismatical harangue. He therefore appealed to them at once to pull "the vagabond" down. But, though some of them were very drunk, there were others sufficiently sober to have been impressed by what they had heard and seen. These replied:—"No, Sir, the man says nothing but the truth. Pray, hold your peace, and let us hear what he has to say." That, however, was just what the clergyman desired to prevent. Pressing close to the preacher, he seized him by his shirt-collar, and dragged him from the chair. He tore Mr. Nelson's coat-cuffs, and tried to rend his coat down the back: failing in that, he seized him by the coat-collar, shook him violently, and then ceased through exhaustion. Mr. Nelson then said, "Sir, you and I must shortly appear at the bar of

God, to give an account of this night's work." His assailant replied, evidently startled, "What! must you and I appear at the bar of God together?' Mr. Nelson answered, "As sure as we look one another in the face now." The clergyman then unloosed his grasp of the preacher's throat, took the Bible from his hand, and turning it over and over, said,—"It is a right Bible; and if you preach by the Spirit of God, let me hear you preach from this text, 'Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.'" Mr. Nelson doubtless received that special aid which Christ promised to His disciples when they should be brought before men in authority, without having time for premeditation. The miners quickly silenced disturbers, saying, "Let us hear what he will make of the parson's text." The clergyman himself repeatedly said, "That is right, that is true." Thus amid conflict and triumph was the truth proclaimed.

Meanwhile the cause of God in Macclesfield was making some progress, although but slowly. Now and then there was a fresh face seen at the lowly place of worship, in consequence of a kindly invitation given by one who had tasted the sweets of true religion and desired that others should be similarly blessed.

There was at this time a baker living in the town, named John Clulow. He seems to have been somewhat inclined towards the right ways of the Lord, yet not sufficiently so to devote himself heart and soul to the cause of Christ. His wife, Elizabeth, was not one to halt between two opinions. She sought and found God's pardoning mercy, and was made a new creature in Christ Jesus. From that time she was "an Israelite indeed." She gave herself fully to God, and to His people according to the will of God, saying of the little

company among whom she had found Jesus, "This people shall be my people, and their God my God." It would appear that her husband did not at all times emulate her religious decision, nor enjoy the constant peace she did. But it is also apparent that he must have allowed his wife entire freedom to worship according to her own convictions, and to assist, as far as was prudent, in the maintenance of the good work. The addition of Elizabeth Clulow was a considerable advantage to the Methodism of Macclesfield; and when a few more joined themselves to the Society, it seemed time to think of some more respectable place in which to assemble. From the private dwelling at Shrigley-fold, the centre of Macclesfield Methodism had removed to the old stable in the town. Another removal was now contemplated, and in due time effected.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PREACHING-ROOM. 1750—1762.

THE Methodists of Macclesfield did not occupy the old stable very long. The little band of godly people felt that an alteration was desirable. Some of their neighbours who might be inclined not only to hear a Methodist preacher in the street, but to join them in their prayer-meetings, were deterred by the extreme rudeness of their place of worship. What must be done? What could they do? To build a meeting-house such as the Independents had in King Edward Street was out of the question. What appeared practicable was, to rent a cottage from some person who would be willing to allow them to make one large room on the ground floor, and to worship therein.

They had sufficient reason, however, to fear that if their intentions were generally known, such an influence might be exerted on the owners of cottage-property as would prevent their obtaining a dwelling suitable for their purpose; and if they took a cottage without avowing to what purposes it was to be devoted, they would be liable to legal ejectment. They, therefore, prudently

appointed a committee of two of their number, in whose judgment and integrity they could trust, namely, George Pearson, the tailor, and Elizabeth Clulow, the baker's wife, to transact the business for them. These two succeeded in the affair better than might have been anticipated. They rented a cottage, in their joint names, on a lease for forty years.

Having thus guarded against ejectment from the property, the two proceeded to make the needful alterations. It is possible that the poor folk then in the Society had confidence in the resources of Mr. Pearson and Mrs. Clulow, as well as in their goodness and sagacity. The cost of the alterations we may safely conclude was chiefly defrayed by the two. The apartment thus formed seemed to them spacious. Indeed, Elizabeth Clulow was startled by its appearance and extent. It was not intended to accommodate the crowd when a preacher was among them, and the weather was fine: there was always room in "The Waters," "Parson's Green," or elsewhere. The apartment was for the more select gatherings, and these had not yet been large, and occasionally were very small. So, when these two stewards were giving a final inspection before the opening service, Mrs. Clulow said, "Ah, George, we shall never be able to fill this place; why, it will hold forty folk!" For once the man was more hopeful amid difficulties than the woman: George replied, "I'll warrant you; hold up your heart."

Hitherto, as might have been expected, the indoor congregation had been a slender one. When some preacher who was regarded as famous was announced, or when it had been noised abroad that some zealous partizan of "orthodoxy," or some enraged tavern-keeper was assembling a powerful force "to drive the

Methodists," a great crowd would be sure to run together. But when a few simple souls were merely meeting to talk and pray in their homely manner, and that in a place which had formerly been a stable, most people, if they even knew of the circumstance, left them to enjoy themselves in their own peculiar way. But the Lord has often imparted more ample spiritual advantages and an extension of influence to those who have made sacrifices for the advancement of His cause. It was so upon the opening of the preaching-room. The superior comfort thus provided, with God's blessing, attracted greater numbers to the more select assemblies of the devoted people who were wont to meet there. Within a month of the opening of "The New Room," a "committee meeting" had to be held concerning the enlargement of the place. No doubt Mr. Pearson and Mrs. Clulow were the chief projectors. It was agreed that more accommodation should be obtained by the formation of a gallery. If half the chamber floor were removed, and a pulpit placed sufficiently high, the remaining half would furnish room for a score at least, who could both join in the singing and see and hear the preacher. Thus not far from the stable was formed and enlarged a new and real preaching-room.

Among those who appear to have been the earliest to join the God-fearing people, when they had thus exerted themselves to emerge from their low estate, was Mrs. Ryle, whose son was afterwards so justly esteemed among the Methodists, and who was honoured by his fellow-townsmen by being elected Mayor of Macclesfield. The good old lady was accustomed to say that, while listening to the first Methodist sermon she ever heard, she was seated on a "bake-stone." This circum-

stance fixes the date with moderate accuracy. There would be no "bake-stone" in the old stable, as horses' food is not cooked, nor would there be any "bake-stone" in the little chapel which was, after a time, erected purposely for Divine worship. So Mrs. Ryle, who afterwards had such reason to be thankful for Methodism, must have been among those whose attendance at "the Room" justified George Pearson's hopeful view of things. There had thus been made a considerable advance in the right direction; yet when we try to realise the condition of Methodism in the town, we cannot but perceive that it was still the "day of small and feeble things."

The formation of Circuits, or Rounds as they were then generally called, did not at once result in the establishing of Quarterly Meetings. The first of these, of which we have any record, was held at Todmorden Edge, October 18th, 1748, the Rev. William Grimshaw acting as Circuit-steward, though without any such designation. After such meetings had been regularly held in that vicinity four times, they were discontinued there for nearly five years.

During that period a Circuit Meeting of a sort was held for the Manchester Round, in which that of Cheshire seems to have been for the time absorbed. So far as can be ascertained, the friends held their meeting at the house of John and Alice Crosse, of Booth Bank, but were hospitably provided for by a more opulent neighbour, Mr. John Hope, of Bucklow Hill. Five years had elapsed since Mr. Wesley preached in "The Waters;" the new room had been opened; the itinerant preachers had begun their visits; yet Macclesfield sent neither steward nor money. Other places, however, were as yet not able to do much, as will be seen from

the entry in the Circuit-book, dated April 20th, 1752, and headed—

"*A true account of the Money brought in by the Stewards from each Society in the Manchester Round, for the use of the Preachers, and for the discharging of necessary expences.*

Chester . . .	Jonathan Pritchard .	0	12	0
Alpraham . .	Richard Cawley .	0	12	0
Acton . . .	William Davison .	0	7	0
Booth Bank . .	John Cross . .	0	10	11
Oldfield Brow . .	William Johnson .	0	8	0
Davy-hulme . .	Robert Heywood .	0	15	0
Shackerley . .	John Hampson .	0	4	0
Bolton . . .	George Eskrick .	0	8	2
Bank-house . .	James Scolfield .	0	8	0
Astbury . . .	Jonathan Booth .	0	5	6
Manchester . .	Richard Barlow .	2	3	5
Kadbrook . .	Mary Webster . .	0	6	0
		£7	0	0 "

The comparative feebleness of Methodism at this date was manifest in other forms than that of Circuit finance. Though the preaching-room which would hold "forty folk" had speedily to be made more commodious by the addition of part of a chamber floor, and though George Pearson and Elizabeth Clulow remained faithful to their religious profession, and zealous for the salvation of souls, it does not seem that they were gladdened by witnessing any extensive work of God in connection with their efforts for several years. The visit of the itinerant preachers to the lowly home on "The Waters" would be regarded as one of the quiet events of their somewhat stormy, as well as useful, lives.

Nor does it appear that during this period of Methodist history in the town there was often any severe persecution. This circumstance may, in part, be accounted for by the character of the clergyman who was

then minister at St. Michael's, the Rev. James Roe, father of the Hester Ann Rogers who became famous among the Methodists of the next generation for her eminent holiness, zeal, and Christian influence. Mr. Roe, as his daughter testified, was a man of strict morals, and, so far as he was enlightened, of real piety. There was allowed in his family much that the early Methodists thought wrong, but there was also an earnest attempt to serve God according to the views of those who were at the head of the household. Truthfulness was inculcated, and reverence for God's name and day. Family-prayer was maintained at the vicarage, and the children were taught, by precept and example, to make their wants known to Him who "seeth in secret." As in the earlier part of the vicar's ministry Methodism had no existence in his parish, and during the later part it obtruded neither upon him, his family, or his work, he does not appear to have opposed it, or to have encouraged others to do so. Probably he scarcely heard of "the Room" near Temple Bar; and when it happened to be mentioned he would regard it as certainly no worse, and possibly somewhat better, than another room wherein, it was rumoured, Papists repeated prayers to the Virgin, and even celebrated the idolatrous mass—if they did not also mingle Jacobite treason with Romish superstition. Neither "conventicle" seemed of sufficient importance to demand the interference of the Mayor: possibly the Methodist room was beyond the power of his Worship; none could prove that these people did more harm than good. Mr. Roe at any rate stood aloof. If he gave no invitation to Mr. Wesley, that "eccentric and restless" brother clergyman, to occupy the pulpit at St. Michael's, neither did he incite and head a mob to exterminate the new sect. While the

Macclesfield Methodists were not countenanced by their parish clergyman, they at least do not seem to have suffered from him. In short, their comparative exemption from persecution was probably owing to their insignificance. After a brief struggle the ungodly acquiesced in their possession of "the Room" as an accomplished fact, and up to the year 1752 the Society had made no such progress as to excite the rage of its opponents.

At the Conference held in London, in May, 1754, Mr. Peter Jaco was appointed to the Manchester Circuit, and was informed that his commission as a Methodist preacher extended over Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire. Comparing it with what was the York Circuit eight years before, we perceive that Staffordshire has been added, while Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire have been taken away. It is also observable that Manchester has taken the place of York as head-quarters, probably as being somewhat more central for the newly-arranged Circuit of five counties. The little Society at Macclesfield was now part of the Manchester Round, as it had previously been part of York, and still earlier of Cheshire.

On Tuesday, May 24th, 1759, Mr. Wesley after, it seems, an absence of twelve years, once again visited Macclesfield. He rode over from Manchester, where he had enjoyed the privilege of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ without interruption. To the disgrace of their office the magistrates of Manchester, like those of too many other places, had for some years declined to protect the Methodists against their assailants. The lawless mob had fully understood what was meant by this want of action on the part of those who held the Commission of the Peace, in many cases clergy-

men as well as laymen. The mob perceived that, on the whole, their "betters," so called, desired that these "Gospel Itinerants" should be driven from the neighbourhood, and they consequently followed out the impulses of their cruel and profane natures with little check. Some magistrates in Manchester had however at length resolved to make a stand on behalf of the law-honouring, instead of countenancing anarchy. The result was that an Englishman's right of free speech was acknowledged, and wicked men shrank into their own obscure hiding-places.

At Macclesfield, however, where hitherto the Methodists appear to have been little known, and where they were despised rather than hated by those who did happen to hear of their existence, a disposition was manifested by some vulgar men to emulate the rioters of earlier years at Wednesbury and Darlaston. It was often affirmed, by one who declared that he, when a lad, witnessed the circumstance, that on one occasion when the Rev. John Wesley was preaching near Mr. George Pearson's, there arose considerable disturbance and uproar, and one of the many stones which were flung hit the preacher on the face, causing it to bleed; but that Mr. Wesley proceeded with his sermon as though nothing special had occurred. If some hurt was inflicted on Mr. Wesley at this time, it is probable that it was not serious. On no occasion does he record his having been thus treated at Macclesfied; but the entry he made, concerning this his second visit to the town, is such as would be quite consistent with the account given of what the lad beheld in "The Waters," and even with slight personal injury on which he did not care to dwell. We read that on his arrival, "Abundance of people ran together, but

wild as colts untamed. Their noise quite drowned my voice at first; but in a while they were tolerably quiet, and before I had done, all but about four or five lubberly men seemed almost persuaded to be Christians."

During the year in which this visit of Mr. Wesley occurred, John Bennet, who had been so zealous in the introduction of the Gospel to numberless places around Macclesfield, including Shrigley-fold, and far distant localities also, entered into his endless reward. He died bearing an exultant testimony to the power of Christ's blood to cleanse from all sin. After his separation from Mr. Wesley and the Methodists, he had become the pastor of an Independent church which he had organised at Warburton, in Cheshire. Among the people of this charge he laboured with much painstaking and considerable success until called to a comparatively early rest.

The name of John Bennet, although at his death he was not in connection with Mr. Wesley, must ever stand in close association with Methodism in general, and the Methodism of Cheshire and Derbyshire in particular. He toiled hard for souls during the few years he was spared. He was, at one time, greatly esteemed and loved by Mr. Wesley. When in October, 1749, he married Mrs. Grace Murray, whom Mr. Wesley had spoken of as his "right hand," and whom he had doubtless intended to make his own wife, it does not appear that the latter cherished the slightest ill-will, though he experienced great distress of soul. When Mr. Bennet fully adopted the Calvinistic tenets, and deemed it a matter of duty to warn all who would hear him,—and they were many,—against Mr. Wesley, using at times opprobrious epithets concerning him, there was

little in our Founder's reply which could be regarded as recrimination; the defence of his character and of the Truth was manly, yet charitable and gentlemanly. At the close of life it became fully apparent that Mr. Bennet's heart was right towards God; and that if any unworthy views of his old friend and leader still remained, they sprang from mistaken zeal on behalf of Christ and His glorious gospel. He died in the full triumph of faith, and entered the happy world where saints dwell in cloudless and everlasting light.

Thus time rolled on without any marked extension of Methodism in Macclesfield. Mr. Wesley, however, soon re-visited the town. Easter Sunday, March 22nd, 1761, was not a favourable day for out-door preaching; the wind was chilly, as it often is at that season. On the preceding Friday, Good Friday, Mr. Wesley had lamented that the people at Burslem, generally, did not so care for the things belonging to their peace as to listen to him when the cold was thus unpleasant, and, as they might be ready to think, dangerous. But on Easter Sunday it had been arranged that he should proclaim the Risen Saviour in Macclesfield. No doubt he would have thankfully accepted the use of St. Michael's church had it been offered to him, for it seemed probable, unless Macclesfield weavers should prove hardier or more earnest than the Burslem potters, he would not have a large audience. The church, doubtless, would have been crowded, but it was not accessible to him. Though Mr. Roe was desirous to do good, he was not prepared to encourage such irregular proceedings as those of "these Oxford Methodistic clergymen." Besides, it was to be expected that his ecclesiastical superior at Prestbury would have laid his interdict on any such employment of his pulpit.

Mr. Wesley therefore waited until the service at St. Michael's was over, and the congregation had had sufficient time to take some refreshment. At one o'clock he again raised his voice on behalf of his gracious Master. The preaching-house could scarcely have contained a hundred people, even with its gallery, so that, piercing as was the wind, he felt constrained to preach in the open air. This time, however, it was not in front of George Pearson's dwelling, but near the humble house of prayer where the Methodists had been now for some years accustomed to worship. Many would thus learn or be reminded where they might constantly hear, from less eminent men, the same great truths. To the credit of the people of Macclesfield the congregation was, in Mr. Wesley's estimation, large, and there was no disturbance deemed worthy of record; and so it was announced that, so soon as the church service should be over, he would preach to them again. They appear to have liked the tidings thus brought to them, as twice as many people assembled at the later service, notwithstanding the inconvenience of the wind. The preacher opened and enforced St. Peter's declaration, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour." Then, after on this occasion devoting a whole Sabbath, and that Easter Day, to Macclesfield, he rode on, as the darkness of night closed around him, to Manchester. It was desirable that he should reach that town before he slept, for he was to preach there at five o'clock on the following morning, and in the evening of the same day to meet in Leeds all the preachers of those parts.

The year 1762 was a memorable one for Macclesfield, and for several of those adjacent towns and villages which were afterwards included in the Macclesfield Circuit.

There had been a long season of comparative spiritual barrenness. The Lord had displayed His gracious power in the conversion of a few souls. Some of these were diligent both in getting good and trying to benefit others. But their efforts had not yet been attended by any large results. This must in part be ascribed to contentions, respecting Calvinism and discipline, which greatly disturbed the small Societies throughout Cheshire. These had become far more familiar with Mr. Bennet's voice and name than with those of any of Mr. Wesley's "helpers." They had been accustomed to hear the famous and zealous preacher from Chinley during his frequent visits to different parts of their county, and greatly valued his ceaseless and self-denying toils. Mr. Wesley and his coadjutors had been introduced to them as the friends and associates of John Bennet *Now* Mr. Bennet was constantly warning them against the doctrines taught by Mr. Wesley, and his assumption of authority among the little Societies. If Mr. Wesley said less against Mr. Bennet's teaching and general behaviour, it was evident that he no longer commended them. Which of these parties was right? What must unlettered folk, who really wished to save their souls, believe and do? Whom must they receive? Some leaned to John Bennet, as their earliest and long-tried friend, while others were fully persuaded that the utterances and spirit of Mr. Wesley, and of the preachers sent by him, were most in accordance with New Testament doctrine. As might have been expected, there was much warmth of feeling and some degree of asperity. The zeal which might have been of incalculable value if directed to the salvation of perishing sinners was, at least in part, misapplied, and little good was effected. In the year 1762, God mercifully

looked on those feeble Societies in that part of Cheshire and the adjacent counties, and revived His work.

One of the Lord's servants who was specially employed in bringing about this desirable result was Mr. John Furz. He had been previously qualified in various ways for such service, and it may not be uninteresting to trace such preparation by God of an agent whom He employed in that blessed revival. A man was needed who had a deep conviction of the guilt and peril of unconverted souls, a yearning compassion for those ready to perish, and a meekness of spirit which would aid him in leading disciples of Jesus to bear with each other's failings, and to love as brethren. God had provided such an agent in John Furz, providentially now sent to this neighbourhood.

Years before, Mr. Furz, when a young man, had so felt his sins as to be on the verge of despair. Yet had he wrestled on for mercy in agonizing pleading with God. While thus engaged he uttered the appeal, "Are there no bowels of mercy for me?" In a moment a gracious answer was given from above. The penitent suppliant heard a "still small" voice within his heart, saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." His sorrow was turned into joy, and his darkness into light. He afterwards thus recorded his transports of grateful and wondering joy: "My soul was filled with love to God, for His unspeakable mercies. Now indeed I did 'draw water out of the wells of salvation.' Yea, a fountain was opened in my heart, springing up into everlasting life. My tongue could not express the feelings of my heart: I was lost in speechless rapture. I now knew what it was to believe: I knew on Whom I believed: even on Him that justifieth the ungodly. . . I was as in a new world. If I walked out into the open field, everything

showed forth the glory of God. If I looked at the sun, my heart said, 'My God made this, not for Himself, but us.' If I looked on the grass, the corn, the trees, I could not but stand and adore the goodness of God. My Bible also was become a new book: it was sweeter to my soul than honey to my tongue. I had near communion with God day and night. And, O how I longed for all the world to know what I knew." A man who had been thus drawn forth by the mercy of God from the horrible pit, and placed on the Rock, was likely, if he proved faithful, to arrest the attention of men somewhere, and in some manner, to the Gospel message.

But in the state of the Methodist Societies throughout Cheshire, and the entire area which had once been known as "John Bennet's Round," there was need, at the time Mr. Wesley paid his second visit to Macclesfield, of a preacher of much gentleness as well as of burning zeal. Now John Furz had early in his Christian life given evidence of such a disposition. To his painful surprise he had found that the woman whom he had loved, and taken as his wife, was not really a disciple of Jesus as he had supposed during their courtship. When unmarried, he had occasion to go to the residence of the Earl of Pembroke. There he was favourably impressed with the appearance and demeanour of one of the housemaids. He believed that, like himself, she was determined to serve the Lord. They frequently met, and never separated without prayer. When, however, the irrevocable knot had been tied she refused to join him in prayer, unless a form was used, and afterwards declined to kneel with him at any time. One Sunday morning John came down stairs, intending, as his wife knew, to go to church, and to stay in order

to receive the Lord's Supper. She stood at the foot of the stair-case, and without uttering a word struck her husband in the face so severely that she broke one of his teeth. She was, however, startled at her own frenzy and cruelty; and stepping back, sat down in a chair, and wept aloud, saying, "Lord, I cannot help it; I am so tempted of the devil." Poor John had already borne much patiently, and his meekness was not even now overcome. He went to her, placed the tooth in her lap, and, without one word of reproach, retired to his chamber. Here his prayer on her behalf prevailed, and she became truly penitent. The next morning she rose early. When her husband came down stairs he found her weeping. She at once inquired in an humble tone of voice, "Can you forgive me?" Three hours did John Furz walk in the fields that day, alone with his God, pleading for the salvation of his wife. When he returned home, he learned to his unutterable satisfaction that the Lord had spoken peace to her soul. Evil had indeed been overcome by good. Daily did she now seem to her husband to grow in grace, and when he entered on the work of an Itinerant Methodist Preacher she inquired not, "Who will provide for me and the children?" In her letters she said, "I find difficulties, but let not that distress you. I am content. Go straightforward in the work that God has called you to." Such a man as this was the one wanted for the "Cheshire Round;" as there was much evil to be overcome, and evil which could be vanquished only in the spirit of meekness.

Fearless courage was also necessary to the man who should dare to disturb Satan's rule in those days. Macclesfield had been for the most part quiet hitherto; but this had largely resulted from the circumstance that

Satan's kingdom had not there been rudely disquieted: no great inroads had as yet been made upon it. If success were vouchsafed, fiercer persecution might be anticipated. John Furz had given proof that while he was gentle towards the unkind, and full of tender compassionate zeal on behalf of perishing sinners, he was undaunted by aught that earth or hell could do. One Sunday, some years before he became a travelling preacher, he was invited to preach on Salisbury Plain, which was not very far from his early home. A very great company was gathered from the villages on both sides of the plain. As soon as Mr. Furz began to speak a man came forward and presented a gun at his face, swearing that he would blow out his brains if he uttered another word. The preacher went on, and the man went on swearing, putting the gun sometimes to his mouth, and at other times to his ear. When the sermon was over, the congregation were invited to sing. During the singing of a hymn, the ruffian got behind Mr. Furz, and fired off the gun, burning off part of the hair of his head. A preacher who could calmly proceed with his work in such circumstances as these was well fitted for the Cheshire and other Rounds.

It was highly advantageous to Methodism that, from the first, there were at its head among the laity those whose intelligence could not be disputed, even by its foes. Macclesfield was thus favoured at an early period. Among those Methodists at this time whose social position gave them some influence was Mrs. Daintry, whose son was afterwards a highly-respected banker in the town. Earnestness in worship and zeal for the salvation of souls might, when manifested by the poor and illiterate, be regarded as fanaticism, but could scarcely be thus designated in the case of such persons

as Mrs. Daintry. During the time in which the Methodists worshipped in the transformed cottage, a prayer-meeting was once being held, and several penitents were seeking mercy with all their heart: they were crying to the Lord aloud, and the believers around them, intent on securing the blessing they sought, were joining in the supplication. They were utterly unmindful of what those in the vicinity might think of them. It happened that an attorney of the town, in no way favourable to Methodism, and an utter stranger to such conviction of sin as leads to strong penitential cries and tears, was passing the preaching-room on his way home from his office. He imagined that he could both startle these ignorant enthusiasts, and put an end to their noisy vociferations, by stepping suddenly among them. He raised the latch, and, pushing his way forward in an abrupt manner, exclaimed aloud, "Halloo! what's all this about?" To his astonishment Mrs. Daintry, whom he well knew, stepped from behind the door and confronted him. With an air of solemn and dignified composure she said, "I will inform you, Mr. X——. The arrows of the Almighty are in the hearts of some of these people, and the poison thereof drinketh up their spirits." The lawyer was abashed and awed. He merely ejaculated, "O, Mrs. Daintry, is that you!" Then, after a brief pause, added, "Good night, Mrs Daintry," and withdrew in confusion.

CHAPTER V.

SHOWERS OF BLESSING. 1762—1763.

ONE Monday night in March, 1762, a gracious shower of saving grace descended on the little band of praying men and women in the preaching-room outside Temple Bar. The Methodists of Macclesfield had heard of wonders wrought by God at Bolton, in Lancashire, and at places still nearer to them. They had themselves been led to pray yet more earnestly for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. They were ready now to confess how they had manifested a zeal for mere opinions, which had caused them to regard each other with suspicion and even dislike. The fire of love divine had expelled the "strange flames" which had been kindled among them. Yet one more Sabbath had passed without anything remarkable occurring in their sanctuary. They were as the disciples in Jerusalem during the days which preceded Pentecost. From their worldliness and strifes they had been drawn to the throne of grace, and were pleading for the gift of the Holy Ghost promised to them by their ascended Lord, of whose exaltation and bounty they had been reminded by Mr. Wesley when on his visit twelve months before.

It pleased God that another of His servants, whose course was but brief, yet happily consistent and devoted,

should be honoured by being present on the memorable occasion. Possibly there might have been some danger of the little flock at Macclesfield looking too much to the human agent, had it been while Mr. Wesley or Mr. Furz was visiting them that the revival commenced. They were to be taught to look higher than earth.

John Oldham was one of the earliest preachers employed by Mr. Wesley. He was born in Manchester, and, after having been converted among the Methodists, was sent forth to make known to others "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Even among the preachers of those days Mr. Oldham was distinguished by the earnestness with which he urged all to seek a *free, full,* and *present* salvation from sin. He was infirm, and suffered considerably. He lived as on the brink of death, expecting every moment the call of his Lord. He cherished an intense and constant desire to be every moment ready for the summons, making it the business of his life to stand with his loins girt and his lamp burning. The special seriousness of his spirit, and his unsparing dealing with the consciences of his hearers, excited the prejudice of all who were disposed to indulge in any degree of spiritual slothfulness.

Four years after this memorable visit of Mr. Oldham to Macclesfield, he was removed to his reward in heaven; and the record made of his triumph over death may not here be out of place. So extreme did Mr. Oldham's debility become, that he was apprehensive that he should be fatally seized during some journey. This fear, however, did not cause him to diminish his labours for Christ and his zeal for souls, but led him, for prudential reasons, to carry with him a paper on which his name, and address, and the name of the place he was going to, were distinctly written. He thus

hoped to prevent trouble to his friends, and to those who might find his unconscious or lifeless body. For some time this presentiment was generally in his mind when he mounted his horse. A few weeks before his death, his weakness was such that he was afraid he should be unable to preach, and expressed his fear to his loving wife. The devoted woman encouraged him to make the effort by saying, "My dear, go into the pulpit, and the Lord will strengthen thee." After he had spoken a few words very feebly, it was apparent that the needful aid had been imparted. A special unction attended the word as thus uttered. Many of God's people were greatly comforted, and some penitent mourners obtained the assurance of peace they had been seeking. One who received signal benefit on this occasion said of the preacher:—"He is going soon to rest, and I shall go with him." On the next Lord's day John Oldham was quite unable to preach: the time of his departure, so long and solemnly anticipated had arrived, and before the Sabbath had closed, the suffering saint had entered on the perfect and eternal rest. It was remarkable that about two hours after his death, the person who had predicted the death of both was summoned into the unseen world. Those who had, in much feebleness, worshipped together on the preceding Lord's day, the sufferer in the pulpit and the sufferer in the pew, were thus suddenly removed together to the glorious temple above.

To return. On that Monday evening previously referred to, henceforth to be regarded as memorable in the history of Macclesfield Methodism, John Oldham had been preaching. There had been a long season of dryness and barrenness, and none would feel this more painfully than such a man as the preacher of that

evening. The abounding cheerfulness and hopefulness possessed by many of the early Methodist preachers, and which so wondrously sustained them, do not appear to have been possessed by Mr. Oldham. He was not so often in exultant frames as Mr. Furz, nor did he enjoy the admirable equanimity of Mr. Wesley. His soul was oppressed by his view of the need of personal holiness, and the awful neglect of such sanctity by surrounding multitudes. The service had been concluded without any tokens of the coming revival. Mr. Oldham was leaving the room, although part of the congregation, at least, remained. Suddenly a man, in whom the Spirit of God had been striving mightily, fell down on his knees and cried aloud for mercy. All were amazed. We may reasonably suppose that even George Pearson and Elizabeth Clulow would be astonished. As they wondered, other persons present yielded to the convictions of sin with which they had long contended.

John Oldham was not the man to leave weeping and pleading penitents. Marvelling at the goodness and power of his Master, he returned to the room, and pleaded on behalf of the awakened sinners, pointing them to the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Hour after hour thus passed away. At midnight the preacher was constrained to leave the place: probably he had other appointments awaiting him on the morrow, and his sickly frame needed rest. But those who were seeking salvation were unwilling to depart until they had secured the boon they asked for. Each one, like Jacob of old, was saying, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." There were believers, too, present who would and could stay as long as those seekers had time and strength to supplicate mercy. So the preacher retired, and the pleading with

God was renewed. Doubtless the worldly in that neighbourhood would be full of wonder. The loud and bitter cry, arising from many sinners pricked to the heart, was heard afar, and it was prolonged. Again and again the holy song or shout of gladness arose, as another and another soul stepped into the liberty of God's "dear children;" and again and again the cry of many was lifted up on behalf of those who still remained in bondage. The people of Macclesfield in general had retired to rest and slept; the sun had risen, and men were going forth to their daily tasks, before that company of suppliants dispersed. They then went forth with exceeding great joy. Most of them would have to hasten to their manual labour, having had no sleep or rest during the night, but they were as giants refreshed with new wine. God had looked on their affliction, and had taken away their reproach. The Lord was still in their midst. At six in the morning the voice of prayer ceased in that room for a time. But, during that night of prayer and intercession, nine precious souls had been filled with peace and joy through believing.

On Tuesday night the disciples assembled again. Other persons, who had hitherto remained undecided, were now endeavouring to press in at the strait gate, and once more was heard earnest and importunate pleading on behalf of penitent sinners. Now, however, the nine who had been in distress twenty-four hours before, were among the believing and rejoicing ones. On that evening also, holy thanksgiving, as one and another was made happy in the Saviour's love, repeatedly burst forth. Six or seven on that occasion were added to the Church of Christ. On Wednesday evening the little flock again gathered to the place where their

gracious Shepherd had so wondrously manifested His presence and power; and one or two wanderers were led into the fold. So the work of God went on each night until the following Monday, when God again gloriously revealed Himself. Those eight days of special Divine visitation are conspicuous in the history of Macclesfield Methodism, having contributed much to raise it from the lowly and uninfluential position which it had hitherto occupied.

About the same period there was a similar religious quickening throughout that part of England. Indeed that very month of March, 1762, was a time long noted by the godly in those parts. In Liverpool there was a blessed work, during which many were brought into the enjoyment of God's pardoning love. On one occasion nine, in one hour, thus passed from darkness into light. Several who had for some time enjoyed the witness of God's Spirit to their adoption, were now enabled to testify, from happy experience, that the Blood of Christ "cleanseth from all sin." At Bolton the work of grace was greatly extended. On the 21st of March a love-feast was held in Congleton, which God honoured by marked tokens of His presence: five persons were taught by the Spirit to rejoice in God their Saviour. At Burslem, also, the faithful few were made to exult. It had been bad enough that vile and wicked men had sought to annoy and injure the disciples of Christ; but the followers of Jesus had had greater reason to mourn,—only two persons had been converted in Burslem during twelve months. Many whose names were still found on the Class-papers, had become lifeless in Divine things. But the Lord heard the cry of those who pleaded, "O Lord, revive Thy work." The Spirit was given to "reprove of sin." Not a few in the bitterness of their

souls cried aloud, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Sometimes as many as six and seven were led to the Saviour in a week; and the fire of Divine love was made to burn brightly on altars where it had become feeble and dim.

Rain descended heavily as Mr. Wesley entered Macclesfield on his next visit,—on Friday, August 6th, 1762. No injury was, however, done to his health by the drenching he got, and in the evening he preached to the people in their revived and enlarged state, which greatly delighted him. During his stay in Macclesfield a deeply interesting enquiry was made by him. He had for some years been thoroughly earnest in exhorting all persons who had obtained pardoning and renewing grace, to seek entire consecration to God: having received the love of God into their hearts, he urged them to "give all diligence" that this love should be made "perfect." At the same time he had recommended that proper caution should be employed by those who thought they had obtained full salvation, as to the profession of such a state of grace.

The Conference of 1747 was largely occupied by the consideration of this important question of Christian perfection: the printed record of the proceedings, styled "Minutes," refers to this at length. After affirming and proving from Holy Scripture that it is the privilege of believers to be cleansed from all sin during the present life, the following questions and replies are furnished:—

"*Q.* 12. Can you shew one such example now? Where is he that is thus perfect?

"*A.* To some who make this inquiry, one might answer, If I knew one here, I would not tell *you*: for you do not inquire out of love. You are like Herod. You only seek the young child to slay it.

"But more directly we answer, There are numberless reasons why there should be few (if any indisputable) examples. What inconveniences would this bring on the person himself, set as a mark for all to shoot at? What a temptation it would be to others; not only to men who knew not God, but to believers themselves. How hardly would they refrain from idolizing such a person! And yet how unprofitable to gainsayers. For if they hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and His Apostles, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

"*Q.* 13. Suppose one had attained to this, would you advise him to speak of it?

"Not to them who know not God. It would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme. Nor to any without some particular reason, without some particular good in view. And then they should have an especial care to avoid all appearance of boasting; and to speak more loudly and convincingly by their lives, than they can do by their tongues.

"*Q.* 14. Is it a sin not to believe those who say they have attained?

"*A.* By no means; even though they said true. We ought not hastily to believe, but to suspend our judgment till we have full and strong proof."

At Macclesfield, in 1762, Mr. Wesley found forty persons who believed that the Blood of Christ had cleansed them "from all sin." John Oldham had given great prominence to this subject in his preaching; and had urged on his hearers the necessity of complete self-dedication to God, with a solemn vehemence which had given offence to not a few. John Furz was as a flame of fire, and not addicted to extreme caution in any of his doings or sayings. The new converts at Maccles-

field had been filled with peace and joy as they trusted in Christ; and their hearts had been gloriously warmed with "charity divine" as they pleaded for the full salvation. What they felt of God's peace and love, they declared without any fear of consequences, and probably without any minute self-scrutiny. Mr. Wesley, though cautious in the statements he made respecting his own attainments, did not harshly rebuke the declarations of those disciples, though many of them had been only converted recently,—since his last visit indeed. He was carefully gathering information concerning Divine things by comparing the infallible teachings of God's Spirit, in His Word, with the operations of that Divine Spirit in the hearts of those who yielded to His influences.

So Mr. Wesley conversed with these rejoicing believers, taking them one by one, and listening to their statements concerning the great things God had done for them, and making needful inquiries. Some of them affirmed that their love was made perfect ten days after they had found peace with God. Others believed they received the priceless blessing seven days after they emerged from darkness; others in four days; and others in three. There were two who declared that God pardoned their sins and renewed their hearts one day, and sanctified them wholly on the next. Five months, however, had elapsed since this work of grace commenced, and there had been some opportunity for testing its reality by what had been observed by the more experienced of the disciples. Probably Mr. Wesley thought that, as yet, there was scarcely the "full and strong proof" required by the "Minutes" of 1748, without which we ought to suspend our judgment. But, on the other hand, there was evidence in favour of the work of grace which ought not to be despised.

Mr. Wesley's record, after stating what the happy disciples at Macclesfield affirmed, is, "What marvel, since one day is with God as a thousand years."

About this time two young women were standing in one of the streets of the town with a younger companion. The girl was only thirteen years of age, yet was intensely prejudiced against this new sect at the preaching-room. Though a mere child she had often been heard to say, "The Methodists' God shall not be my God. I will sooner go to hell than I will go to heaven in their way." The girl's name was Ann Hooley. On the day referred to, she and her companions saw the Methodist preacher coming. It was solemn John Oldham! As he passed the little group he stopped a moment, and spoke a few serious words to the two elder ones. He then went on his way. Whatever *they* felt, Ann was stricken to the heart. She burst into tears, saying, "What! am I so great a sinner that he will not speak to me?" Mr. Oldham, who was altogether ignorant of the effect produced by his omission, and who was probably mourning that his speaking had proved useless, like many of his previous efforts, was hastily summoned to pray with poor Ann, and advise her what to do. He found her in great distress. No doubt it seemed to her that those repeated declarations concerning future misery had been highly offensive to God: she feared that she had thus pronounced her own doom. Before Mr. Oldham left her, some measure of Divine comfort had been imparted to her troubled soul, and she could rejoice in Christ her Saviour. Three nights afterwards she was brought into great distress again. Disclosures of the evil within her heart had been made; and these had been, for a season, allowed to hide from her view the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. The dear

child mourned piteously, "I have a wicked heart, and I cannot rest till God takes it away." In a few hours the Saviour was afresh and more fully revealed to her.

From that time the language of Ann Hooley's soul was:—"This people shall be my people, and their God my God." Had she been spared she might have been of some use in the Society she had previously in ignorance hated. But God had ordained her early removal to a better world. Only twelve months of Christian life on earth were allotted to her; and she was then removed to dwell with the Saviour she had been thus taught to love. Since that time hundreds of children and young people have, from among the Methodists of Macclesfield, been taken to glory; and from other sections of the fold in that town the gracious Shepherd has removed lambs to the pastures and streams of Paradise. The Methodists, year by year, have had occasion to rejoice and mourn concerning such removals. But it is probable that Ann Hooley was the first Methodist child who went from the Macclesfield Society to the Church in heaven.

Mr. Wesley's next visit to Macclesfield was remarkable in two or three particulars. In the first place it seems that he was not well enough to preach on the Sunday. He had not been altogether unoccupied while in Manchester, for he had been hearing of the progress of God's work, and considering the state of the Societies. But it does not appear that he was strong enough to preach, so that the Lord's Day would be spent by him in an unusual manner.

On Monday, June 20th, 1763, Mr. Wesley had so far recovered that about noon he preached in Macclesfield, when another noteworthy circumstance occurred. The Methodists of Macclesfield insisted on providing a

chaise to convey him to Burslem. Most likely he would have proceeded uncomplainingly on horseback; but those who delighted to hear the gospel from his lips had no wish that he should die in the good work any earlier than the Master appointed. They would, it is evident, have found no gratification in seeing him trudge out of the town because they were themselves well accustomed to use their feet. They had never begrudged him the use of a horse; and, now that he was unwell, they must needs hire a chaise for his comfort. It is highly probable that these people had never sat in a carriage themselves, but they insisted that Mr. Wesley should ride in one, and at their expense. It is possible that there had been some informal "committee of ways and means" held by them. George Pearson was beginning to experience that "godliness is profitable unto all things," and Mrs. Clulow was not penniless; so Mr. Wesley rode out of Macclesfield on his way to the Potteries in a chaise provided by a poor but loving people. As he had no wish to represent himself as able to toil without any limit, and endure incredible hardness, and find delight in constant privations, he furnished the picture, for the credit of these generous-hearted disciples, of himself proceeding thus luxuriously, while his horse was led by the side of the chaise, ready for him to mount when he pleased, or felt equal to such exertion, as though he had been a bishop or nobleman. He no doubt felt somewhat as St. Paul did when he received the parcel from Philippi by the hands of Epaphroditus.

But the most remarkable circumstance of all was a gracious deliverance wrought out that day on behalf of Mr. Wesley. Had it not been for the tender care of God, the Macclesfield chaise, and the good intentions of the friends in that town, would have occasioned un-

utterable regret among the Methodists throughout the three kingdoms. Some might have deemed it a judgment on Mr. Wesley for travelling thus luxuriously. There are those who will allow any dealer in shoddy or shares, if successful, to ride "first class," whether sick or well; but will grumble that their pastor should presume in any case to do so; and will not wait to make inquiries for the reason of his apparent extravagance. Mr. Wesley was, however, preserved, though he rode out of Macclesfield in a chaise when there was not one private carriage kept by any gentleman in the place. Between four and five in the afternoon he quitted the chaise and mounted his horse. He thought he could now ride as far as Burslem without injury to his health; and each mile he rode on horseback would diminish the expense to his kind friends. He had not ridden very far when he heard a cry. Looking back, he perceived that some serious accident had occurred, and eventually discovered that the driver had been so careless as to run the chaise against a huge stone, while evidently driving furiously. The carriage was upside down, and shattered almost to pieces. Well was it for the rising cause of Methodism that our revered Founder was not inside the vehicle when the catastrophe occurred.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEETING-HOUSE.—1764—1765.

SOON after the blessed revival which commenced in March, 1762, the Methodists of Macclesfield began to consult with each other concerning the erection of a meeting-house. Their brethren in Manchester had removed from that uncomfortable upper room near the river, and the Methodists of several adjacent towns had ventured to build. The room, near the Common Gate was not very attractive to the half-hearted, nor very comfortable for the zealous. The Lord had also added to their numbers, and among those who had thus joined them there was one who, like Mrs. Clulow, could render some aid in secular matters; and the others, by self-denial and contrivance could manage to do a little. It was therefore resolved to build a place for themselves.

Young Mr. John Ryle agreed to provide the site, if Mrs. Clulow would be responsible for the payment of the workmen's wages. Doubtless, George Pearson and others would render such help as they could. In the case of Mr. Ryle, who was just entering on life, there was a very marked fulfilment of the inspired declaration:—"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with

new wine." When the foundation-stone of the first Methodist Chapel was laid, Mr. Ryle was but a youth, and much despised on account of his association with this new sect of reprovers. Yet a few years after, while still comparatively a young man, his fellow-burgesses paid him the highest honour in their power, by appointing him Mayor.

The Methodists in 1764 did not venture to select a very central position for their place of worship. Possibly they would have found it impossible to obtain a site in such a situation. But these early Methodists appear to have thought it best to build in somewhat retired places. Those who were in earnest after salvation could readily find the chapel; those who were timid, as well as anxious, would be less observed by their acquaintances as they wended their way to the meeting-house; and the lawless opponents of the Truth would be less likely to annoy the worshippers if the hymn-singing, praying, and preaching did not go on near any place of public resort. The Macclesfield Methodists fixed on a site in what is now known as "Commercial Road," and not far from the enclosure now used as the Town Yard. At that time the site of the meeting-house was not regarded as properly in the town, but on that side of Macclesfield nearest to Shrigley-fold.

Among the ungodly and profligate, and also among those church-going people whose zeal was neither originated by love nor guided by knowledge, much indignation was excited by this audacious attempt of the Methodists. It was evident that they regarded their organization as a permanent institution, and that they intended to maintain the footing they had gained. Even the Papists had been tolerated, amid Jacobite plots, in assembling for worship in a room somewhere

Sectaries of various sorts would doubtless spring up, and, if let alone, would wither and die. So Methodism, except by a mob assailing an out-door preacher now and then, had, in Macclesfield, been hitherto allowed quietly to take its own way. Yet, instead of dying out, it was evidently aiming to take a deeper and permanent hold on the place, proclaiming at the same time that no external rites were sufficient to save, and that many worldly amusements, such as dancing, hunting, and racing, long regarded as harmless, were exceedingly hurtful to the soul. Was it to be allowed that such a sect of reprovers and pleasure-spoilers should have a freehold among them? There does not appear to have been any sign encouraging persecution given at this time from the parsonage; but volunteers were not wanting, headed by a man named J. Hall, who undertook to prevent such a nuisance being perpetrated. It was thought that the lawless men were stimulated also by personal enmity to Methodists as well as by hatred to Methodism. Anyhow they determined that the chapel should not be built. At night they broke down what had been built up during the day, scattering and damaging the materials. This work of demolition continued for some time. It almost seemed as though the legends concerning the successful attempts of the devil to prevent the building of monastery, abbey, or other sacred building, were about to find a counterpart in the middle of the eighteenth century. But George Pearson and John Ryle were not superstitious. They knew well that though Satan was engaged in this unholy work of destruction, he employed agents, and that these agents might be detected, and would very likely be afraid of legal consequences. So it proved. The cowardly delinquents were met face to face, and, having

no wish to risk being sent to prison, ceased from their night-work. So the few disciples encouraged each other, as did Nehemiah and his friends:—"The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."

The meeting-house which was thus erected in 1764 was but a very small and unpretending building, yet those who raised it for God's glory thought it a high day when they consecrated it by prayer, and praise, and the ministry of the Word. Certainly it was beautiful and commodious when compared with "the room" and its inconvenient gallery. Besides, they were no longer mere tenants. The chapel thus opened was the Lord's, and therein they could worship Him, and learn the way to heaven, and invite their children and their neighbours to hear of Jesus.

When, in 1764, the first Methodist preaching-house was thus built in Macclesfield there was a little girl, then about eight years of age, dwelling with her parents at the parsonage of that town, whose name afterwards became a household word among the most devout Methodists throughout the entire kingdom. We may therefore linger here to ponder an incident which deeply affected her at the time, and which she deemed worthy of record several years after it occurred. Her father had been dangerously ill, but was recovering, and anticipating the speedy resumption of his duties as the minister of St. Michael's church. One morning, however, Mrs. Roe observed that her convalescent husband was more than ordinarily solemn, as though his mind was entirely engrossed with some very weighty topic. She inquired concerning this. He replied that he had had a dream which was impressive beyond

all conception. He had dreamed that he had been placed before the throne of God, and had beheld an indescribable glory; but not being able to gaze persistently thereon, nor to sustain himself amid the splendour, he had in raptures of joy fallen on his face before Him who sat on the throne. Mrs. Roe naturally inquired what was the appearance he beheld, but the answer was that it was altogether beyond human description: the sight seemed to overpower all his faculties. She asked if anything was said to him. This he declined to state, and never afterwards appeared to be willing to converse with any one on the subject, although it was evident that it was never long absent from his own mind. He had, however, mentioned it himself to little Hester Ann, and the statement concerning her father's dream sunk deep into her mind, which was already awakened to the importance of things unseen and eternal.

Though the vision was a mere dream, its results were beneficial and abiding. From that time the Macclesfield clergyman became more earnest to prepare himself to render up his account. So the very year the little chapel was opened, there was a louder call to repentance heard in the church of St. Michael's. There is no reason to believe that Mr. Roe ever felt the slightest drawings towards Methodism. It is probable that, throughout the brief period during which his life was prolonged, his prejudices remained unabated. He would have been shocked that either of the Wesleys or Whitefield, though ordained clergymen, should have occupied his pulpit. So far as such a small building, in a remote suburb could annoy him, it is likely that the little Methodist chapel did so. Yet Mr. Roe was himself acting much as the early Methodists, "the godly club" at Oxford, acted when they and he were young

men, and they had not learned God's way of saving sinners by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Even little Hester Ann could perceive the favourable change which had been effected in the father she had previously loved and feared. The members of his household had heretofore, at times, trembled at his manifestations of temper, but from that period this warmth and hastiness appeared subdued. He had long endeavoured to fulfil his duties as the "curate in charge," but he became much more diligent and impressive.

In his own family Mr. Roe now manifested tendencies essentially Methodistic. His daughter Hester had acquired already some taste for works of fiction, and, whatever may be said in defence of many such works now, those which then existed were, for the most part, exceedingly mischievous. All these were to be put away henceforth as poisonous to the soul. The time had arrived when Hester Ann expected to begin learning to dance. Her little kinsfolk and acquaintances were taught dancing. Public opinion in the circle in which her parents moved declared that a lady could never move gracefully without such instruction. To the amazement of all concerned, Mr. Roe, though he had never come into contact with Methodism, and indeed knew little or nothing respecting it, positively refused to allow his little daughter to go to the dancing-master's lessons. Instead of such acquirements the father talked to her himself of those things which he deemed likely to help her to become a Christian indeed. Only twelve months were allotted, in the order of Divine Providence, to the father for this special training of his child, and that of his household. But the period was a very momentous one. That dream seems to have been employed to bring home to mind and heart the familiar

lessons of Prayer-book and Bible. Thus could the Spirit Divine give effect to the truth, and prepare a redeemed soul for the solemn change at hand.

It is not improbable that the decease of Mrs. Charles Roe, his sister-in-law, which occurred about the time of his dream, had considerable influence over the mind of her clerical kinsman. She had, while unmarried, and resident in London, been led to Christ under the preaching of the Wesleys, and had united herself to the Methodists there. She received, however, the addresses of Mr. Charles Roe, during his visits to London, and eventually was married to him. Mr. Roe was known to be a rich and prosperous manufacturer, and possibly this may have had some weight with Miss Stockdale. There is, however, also reason to think that Mr. Roe, during their courtship, went with her to the Methodist services, and that he became sincerely attached to evangelical doctrine as preached by the Wesleys, and so assured her. Most likely Miss Stockdale persuaded her heart that her admirer, like herself, enjoyed vital godliness, and that, though not yet a Methodist, he would speedily become one. From her previous and subsequent course we must not conclude that she would have proved false to Christ knowingly, to gain wealth, or ease, or position. She did, however, become Mrs. Charles Roe, and left London to reside in her husband's home at Macclesfield. There she found Methodism, in external circumstances, very different from what it was in London. She had been accustomed to hear the Gospel from the lips of the Wesleys and their clerical associates. In Macclesfield the little Society were thankful for a visit from any preacher who could proclaim to them the truth "as it is in Jesus." Mr. Roe had no connection with the Methodists in his own

neighbourhood, and was fully resolved that none belonging to him should. As a husband he was, in most things, very indulgent, but in this immovable. So Mrs. Roe did not go to George Pearson's class, nor worship in "the room." She did not, however, neglect the things belonging to her peace. At St. Michael's she enjoyed the reading of the Scriptures, and a form of prayer which has been profitable to many. Though her brother-in-law, who occupied the desk and pulpit, was manifestly perplexed on the all-important subject of a sinner's approach to God, he was anxious to teach his hearers their duty. So Mrs. Roe tried to retain her religion without identifying herself with the Methodists.

She had not long to maintain the struggle. In 1763, learning that Mr. Wesley was in the neighbourhood, she found access to him, and made him acquainted with her position and desires, soliciting his advice. A few months afterwards she sickened. It soon became apparent that she was not likely to recover. She herself perceived this, and set herself to the solemn task of preparing for the important change. The counsel given to her by Mr. Wesley when they last conversed proved of essential service in this season of pain and approaching dissolution. The Saviour, whom she had sought and found when unmarried, was now unspeakably precious. Her husband's heart was much drawn to worldly things, but her treasure was in heaven. She cared not to speak or hear anything except about Christ and the better land. When her strength was utterly exhausted, she said with a smile, "Death, thou art welcome!" and passed away to her Lord rejoicing.

There can be no doubt that the death of Mrs. Charles Roe, at once his parishioner and sister-in-law, would add much to the impression made on the mind and

heart of the Macclesfield clergyman by his own dream. Yet it does not seem that there was even then any approach towards the Methodists, among whom the dying saint had received her chief good. Hence when Mr. Wesley, on Thursday, July 19, 1764, again visited Macclesfield, no invitation was given to him to occupy the pulpit at St. Michael's. He was gratified, however, to learn how the lady, with whom he had spoken of Christ a few months before, had been enabled to triumph in the mortal struggle through the blood of the Lamb. From one of the best-furnished homes in Macclesfield she had passed to a mansion in the skies.

On that Thursday evening, after the ordinary tasks of daily life had been completed by the toilers in the town, in the cool and shade succeeding a July day Mr. Wesley preached in the open air to an immense crowd of people. It does not appear that either profligates or bigots cared to oppose. Even J. Hall was too much ashamed, or too much afraid, to molest the Methodists in day-light, especially while listening to their revered leader, known to be an ordained clergyman like Mr. James Roe himself.

In February, 1765, but a few months after Mr. Wesley, while in Macclesfield, had heard of the happy death of Mrs. Charles Roe, her brother-in-law, the minister at St. Michael's, was attacked by mortal disease. The remarkable dream, which had made so solemn and abiding an impression on his mind, appears to have been a gracious premonition, and to have been made a great blessing to him. He was now enabled to anticipate its fulfilment in his appearing in the presence of God with humble joyfulness. It is probable that the malignant fever by which he was prostrated was contracted in the visitation of the sick. Of late he had been

exceedingly assiduous in the fulfilment of all his duties; urging on his parishioners from the pulpit, and in the sick-chamber, to turn from sin to God. During several weeks he suffered greatly, but was enabled to submit himself without reserve to the Divine will, and expressed a confident hope of endless blessedness through God's mercy in Christ. So far as his strength enabled him, he repeated passages of Holy Scripture which were felt by him to be precious; commended his partner and the children to the care of their Heavenly Father; and sang aloud psalms with which he had long been familiar, but which had never previously been so prized. A few days before his departure he called to him his little girl, afterwards so well known among the Methodists as Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, and said to her, taking her hand lovingly in his: "My dear Hetty, you look dejected. You must not let your spirits be cast down: God hath ever cared for me, and He will take care of mine. He will bless you, my dear, when I am gone. I hope you will be a good child, and then you will be happy." Laying his hand on her head, he raised his eyes to heaven, and with a solemnity and affection she remembered throughout the whole of her life, said: "Unto God's gracious mercy and protection I commit thee: the Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, and make thee His child and faithful servant to thy life's end." As was natural, the little girl's heart was full. She tenderly loved her father, and was unutterably distressed by the prospect of losing him, yet was thankful that such a blessing had been invoked on her by his dying lips. She fell on her knees beside the sufferer, and wept until well-nigh blinded and suffocated. Her revered parent entered into life eternal,

April 10, 1765; rejoining the sister-in-law to whom, during a brief time, he had preached, yet from whom he had learned much of saving truth.

Mr. Wesley's next visit to Macclesfield was exceedingly brief. He had been attending the Conference, held in Manchester, where it had commenced on Tuesday, August 20th, 1765, and continued four days. The public services had been largely attended during the week-days; so on Sunday morning at seven he preached in "the new square." This early service no doubt would be less oppressive, on a hot Sunday in August, than that held at Stockport at one o'clock on the same day. The glare was great, and the atmosphere was felt even by Mr. Wesley to be "sultry hot," though preacher and people stood on a green at the south end of the town; but few were disposed to complain, as God "sent a gracious rain upon his inheritance." At six in the evening he preached at Macclesfield, and was provided with a home for the night. There would be little time for inquiry or converse, as he had to be away early in the morning, that he might preach at Birmingham on the Monday evening. It must have tasked the energies of the horse as well as the rider, but they started early, travelled long stages, and arrived at the appointed time.

CHAPTER VII.

LANCASHIRE CIRCUIT. 1765—1768.

WHEN, in 1765, the names of the Circuits, with those of the preachers appointed to labour therein, reappear on the printed "Minutes," we find Macclesfield included in the "Lancashire Circuit." Because the head-quarters were at Manchester, it was sometimes called by the name of that town. The "Round," however, extended into other counties than Lancashire, and so included Macclesfield within its ample limits.

Mr. James Oddie was the assistant-preacher, having three colleagues. He had entered the ministry while very young. In 1760 he wrote to a pious friend:—"The Lord Jesus is the desire of my heart, and the object of my affection at all times. . . . Though there is not a power in my soul, nor a thought in my heart, as far as I know, which thwarts the will of God, yet I never see so clearly as then what need I have of the death of Jesus. My obedience is not, by far, as broad as the commandment; for this I need His precious blood. I feel myself as helpless as an infant of days; for this I need His power. I conceive an infinite number of snares are laid for me; for the avoiding of which I need His wisdom. I find myself a tender weakly branch, far from maturity; for which I need the sap

and nourishment of the Blessed Vine, into which I feel myself ingrafted; yea, Christ is all in all to me. I only desire that I and others may be more and more conformed unto and dependent upon Christ." The concluding years of Mr. Oddie's life were not spent so happily as his friends could have desired. For some cause he left the itinerancy and entered business, and was unfortunate in marriage. There is, however, reason to believe that he died in the Lord.

In riding from Sheffield to Macclesfield on Thursday, April 27th, 1766, Mr. Wesley felt the cold severely, as the snow lay thickly on the Derbyshire hills. He preached at Eyam, on his way. In the evening he was cheered by the earnest spirituality of the Macclesfield Methodists. The subject of Christian Perfection was deeply interesting to him at all times. He remembered the testimony, evidently sincere, which had been borne on the occasion of a previous visit. He now questioned these believers concerning their personal enjoyment of entire sanctification. The result of that examination suggests the wisdom of that caution which Mr. Wesley had inserted in the early "Minutes" respecting the profession of such attainment, and which he exemplified in his own statements of personal religious experience. He records, after conversing with the Macclesfield Methodists: "Hardly a third part of those I formerly examined now retain the glorious liberty which they then enjoyed."

At the Conference of 1766, which was held in Leeds, Mr. John Pawson was appointed, with others, to the Manchester Circuit, or as it was still termed the "Lancashire Circuit." Gradually those "Rounds" were becoming somewhat more limited, but the Lancashire Circuit still included Stockport, Macclesfield, Congleton, Newcastle, Warrington, Liverpool, Bolton, and other

towns, with villages innumerable. Mr. Pawson's name became well known among the Methodists of those days. After Mr. Wesley's death he was twice chosen President, in 1793 and in 1801, being the first minister honoured by re-election to the chair of the Conference. He had three colleagues, and wrote: "We were as the heart of one man. I am inclined to think, that there never were four men more closely united than we were." The year was a very prosperous one, yet marked by a sore trial in the death of one of the four. Paul Greenwood had already been engaged twenty years in the itinerant ministry,—many years longer than Mr. Pawson. He was a truly apostolical man, greatly beloved by the people, and justly prized by his colleagues. He was seized with fever at Warrington, and the sickness proved unto death. During the greater part of his brief illness he was delirious, yet his fervent piety found expression during his unconsciousness, and still more fully when there occurred intervals of self-possession. When he was at the worst, all his conversation was heavenly and spiritual. During the last night of his life he was preaching and praying incessantly. When daylight appeared he said: "Another sun shall rise, Christ the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings." Having so spoken, he fell asleep in Jesus. It was regarded at the time as remarkable that his aged mother, a woman of deep experience in the things of God, died that same morning rejoicing in the Lord, at Keighley, in Yorkshire. Joyful would prove the meeting of mother and son in "the better land." They could not minister to each other in the hour of mortal sickness, but they would unite in singing the new song before the throne of God and the Lamb.

The Conference of 1767 was held in London. To

Mr. Pawson's surprise he was directed to return to Manchester for another year, and as "the Assistant." This was the first Circuit to which he had been appointed a second year. He records, "By reason of this re-appointment, I had, before I left, gained a more perfect acquaintance with the people, and was abundantly more closely united to them; but, alas, while in this world, every pleasure has something of pain attending it. My strong affection for them made it the harder to part from them, so that I suffered not a little when Providence called me away. But we are only 'strangers and sojourners upon earth, as all our fathers were.'" Mr. Pawson was spared, and permitted to labour for God, until 1806. In the spring of that year, while stationed at Wakefield, he was seized with fatal illness, but was found ready. He said, "Give my love to the congregation, and tell them I am going to my precious Saviour: the heaven of heavens is opening to my view; I have nothing on my mind; I have nothing to do but to die. I have long been sailing to this fair haven. Sometimes the seas have been rough and tempestuous: Satan has often tried to raise a storm; if possible, to overset my little bark; but this he could not effect." At another time he exclaimed: "It is enough, Christ died for me; I am mounting up to the throne of God. I know I am dying; but my death-bed is a bed of roses; I have no thorns planted on my dying-pillow."

On one occasion, when Mr. Pawson visited Macclesfield during his appointment in the Circuit, a circumstance occurred which was somewhat extraordinary. Some time previously, a Macclesfield young man had become passionately fond of a young woman, named Ellen Stangers, also resident in the town. Ellen earned

her living with her own hands, receiving work from one of the shops, and doing it at home. The young man was either a relation or favourite of her employer, so that Ellen was perplexed. She had no partiality for him, yet was afraid of offending her employer, and so received her admirer's addresses. After a time he asked from her a promise to marry him. She was resolved never to be so united, as she felt that she would be miserable. But she had entered on a crooked path, and seemed compelled to proceed further therein. Her bread appeared to depend on her not displeasing the person for whom she worked. As no time was to be specified for the wedding, she made the required promise, hoping that something wou happen to rescue her from the dilemma. Ellen had been accustomed to attend church regularly, and regarded herself as very religious, though she had never seen the need of God's pardoning and renewing grace. She did, however, know the guilt of falsehood, and, one day, while sitting at her work, a conviction of the heinousness of her offence took such hold of her that she became unutterably wretched. In vain did she strive to get rid of her misery. There seemed to her but one way of escape, and that was by the frank acknowledgment of her offence to those concerned.

She accordingly went to her employer, taking her work with her, and told him how she had yielded to temptation, and that she felt assured that she had thus destroyed her soul. It does not seem that the master cared about the engagement as she had supposed he did. Had she walked in the path of truth she would have suffered no loss. She then had an interview with her suitor, and explained all to him. But she found that she had surrounded herself with a web from which

there seemed no escape. He was madly in love with her, and regarded himself as having a right to her hand. Eventually he said to her, "If you do not keep your word, I will hang myself at your door; and then I will come and take you away with me to the devil." The language was that of a maniac, but the expression of countenance and voice left little room to doubt that the threat would be carried out so far as the wretched young man, goaded by passion and disappointment, had it in his power.

The unhappy girl sank into utter despair. Her father was made acquainted with what had occurred. In him, ignorance and superstition strangely mingled with affection for his daughter and hope in God. He took her to the clergyman they generally heard, and afterwards to another. Both pitied the poor creature, and tried, but ineffectually, to help her. The distracted father then adopted a course for himself. He directed a friend to read to her "Burkitt's Notes on the New Testament." But no comfort was imparted, and Ellen at length cried out, "Take it away, I cannot bear it." As the book was not removed, she endeavoured to get away from the room. The bewildered and ignorant father held her fast, and, when she struggled, beat her, declaring that she should hear, whether she desired or no.

Such treatment was not likely to result in good. The young woman became worse and worse. She could neither eat, drink, nor sleep; and pined away to a mere skeleton. Those of the townsfolk who availed themselves of the beautiful walks in the neighbourhood of Macclesfield became used to seeing poor Ellen Stangers wandering, without motive, hither and thither. She was often tempted to destroy herself, but reflected

amid her anguish and despair, "If I do, I shall leap into hell immediately. I must go thither, but I will keep out as long as I can."

One day, as she was strolling in the lanes, with misery depicted on her countenance, a person who met her advised her to go and hear the Methodists. She knew little about these people, yet both despised and hated them. Her wretchedness however was extreme, and it was possible she might find ease: at least her adviser said so. One evening she went; and it happened that Mr. Pawson was the preacher. After the service was over she desired to speak to Mr. Pawson. He observed that she talked wildly, but encouraged her to go to the Friend of sinners, crying to Him for deliverance. He perceived that the case was far beyond ordinary advice: there must be a signal interposition from God. Accordingly he arranged for united prayer. About twelve of the Macclesfield Methodists and Mr. Pawson met the distressed young woman the next day, to plead with God in her behalf. These believers had power with God. Ellen received not the full salvation she needed, but hope dawned within her soul. She said, "I never felt my heart pray before. My despair has all gone; I have a hope that I shall be saved." The next day, two or three prayed with her again. She spent all the day with one and another of the Methodists, and did not go home until night. Her father asked, "Nelly, where have you been all this time?" She answered, "I have been among the Methodists." "The Methodists!" he replied; "have you got any good there?" She said, "Yes; I bless God I have. I now hope I shall be saved." "Well," said he, "I care not where you go, if you only get relief."

She could not sleep when she went to bed. While

she was meditating on what she had heard, those words were brought to her mind, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?" She there and then trusted in Jesus, and the Lord spoke peace to her soul. In a moment all pain and sorrow fled away, and she was entirely healed, both body and mind. Early in the morning she went to the house of a Methodist, and clapping her hands together, cried out in an ecstacy of joy, "O my Jesus, my Jesus, my Jesus! What is it that He has done for me! I feel He has forgiven all my sins:

'I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.'"

Her transports were for a time unspeakable. When these subsided, it was evident that both her health and reason had been fully restored, and that the peace of God had been imparted to her.

The perplexity concerning her relation to her suitor was solved by Divine Providence. She was not spared to become a wife. She joined the Society as soon as possible after her happy conversion. During twelve-months she had abundant opportunity to manifest the reality and greatness of the gracious change wrought in her by the power of the Holy Ghost. It seemed likely that her fervent piety would be a great blessing to the little Society at Macclesfield; but it was not to be so. The heaverly Bridegroom called her; and, after a year of Christian discipleship, distinguished by unspeakable happiness and consistent deportment, she died full of faith and love.

It is observable that although "Cheshire" had re-appeared on "the Minutes" as the name of a Circuit, and Macclesfield had probably once been regarded as included in the wide range which then formed the

Cheshire "Round," it was at this time apportioned to the Manchester or Lancashire Circuit; Mr. Wesley, at the Conference, when making such arrangements, having more regard to the efficient carrying on of God's work than to any geographical or ecclesiastical boundaries. It was easier to reach Macclesfield from Manchester than from Chester.

In 1768 the Lancashire Circuit was divided into South and North. Macclesfield naturally belonged to the former. The Rev. Alexander Mather was appointed "Assistant." He afterwards was President of the Conference, in 1792, being the second who occupied the chair after Mr. Wesley's removal. Mr. Mather had already, and recently, endured much hardness. He was scarcely likely in Manchester, Macclesfield or any part of the Lancashire South Circuit, to meet with fiercer opposition than he had lately experienced in an agricultural district. He thus records one of the scenes through which he had passed:—"I was desired to go to Boston. I did so; and preached in a field on a Sunday evening, with tolerable quietness. The next time I went, Mr. Alwood and I judged it would be best to be in the market-place. We began singing, when suddenly a large mob appeared with a drum beating before them: meantime a great number of squibs were thrown among the people. Finding it was impossible to be heard, we proposed going to a friend's, about a mile from the town. The moment we turned our backs, the dirt and stones flew like hail on every side. On the bridge a man stopped us; but we broke from him and went on, with the mob at our heels throwing all that came to hand. Their number continually increasing, we thought it would be most advisable to face them, and try to get back to the town, where we had left our horses.

"My two companions immediately leaped over a wide ditch, which divided the field. But, before I could follow them, one of the mob, coming behind me, struck up my heels, and gave me a violent fall. When I got up my friends were out of sight, and the mob surrounded me on every side. I knew not which way to go, neither indeed how to go at all, being exceeding weak and spent, both with the fall and the many blows I had received. Being a little recovered, I tried to go through them to a foot bridge that was over the ditch. They forbore throwing till I drew near the bridge, and then all cried out, 'Ditch him, ditch him.' And just on the side of the ditch one struck up my heels again. Yet he stood by me, and let me rise up, and walk quietly over the bridge. There I was in the middle of the mob, and had a large field to go through, parted from the road by high rails, which had a broad ditch on either side. When I came to the rails, I knew not how to get over, my breath being almost spent; and, if I could, I saw no likelihood of escaping the being thrown into the ditch; however, they let me crawl over without being much hurt. But as soon as I was on the road, the same person who stopped us on the bridge collared me, to drag me to the horse-pond, while the rest plastered me over afresh with dirt. But just as we came to the pond, a gentleman called out to him that held me, 'Let the man go.' He immediately let go his hold, and I passed by the pond.

"I had still to walk through the whole town, my horse being at the far end of it. When I came into the street, they got the dirt out of the kennels, and threw it in my face. As no door was open to take me in, I was obliged now and then to turn and face them, (otherwise they seldom looked me in the face,) in order to get

breath. When I came into the market-place, there was a general shout for the glorious victory. Before I got to the inn I was just ready to lie down, when one struck me violently, in order to strike up my heels. But I kept my feet, I know not how; which I looked upon as a great mercy, as such a fall upon the stones might have done me much hurt. At the same time one threw a stone which struck me on the temple. I then concluded I must die in their hands. But, by the mercy of God, I was strangely brought through all the multitude, to the inn where I had alighted. Being sat down, my first thought was, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Indeed, my mind (glory be to God!) was kept through the whole in perfect peace.

"By this time some of my friends who had followed at a distance were come in, and were washing my wounds, when the mob came to the door, threatening what they would do to the house, if the landlord did not turn me out. He came in and said, 'I cannot keep you here; for the mob will pull my house down.' I told him, 'Sir, I am in your house; but while I use it as an inn, it is mine. Turn me out at your peril. If you fear for your house, apply to a magistrate for protection.' He went to his landlord, who was a magistrate, and who ordered him to take down the names of the chief rioters. After a while, I mounted my horse in the yard, and then, the gates being opened, rode through a shower of stones, and came safe to our friend's house. But I was so bruised, almost from head to foot, that when I was cold, I could hardly stir. And it was a full year before I quite recovered the hurts which I then received."

The next day Mr. Mather returned to Boston, accompanied by a friend, and appealed to the magistrates

for protection. The chairman endeavoured to evade doing his duty, and spoke roughly to Mr. Mather. But the latter possessed a large measure of Christian wisdom and firmness as well as charity. He was resolved that preachers of the gospel, and others, should not there be subjected to such cruel treatment and grievous peril. Eventually three of the ringleaders asked pardon, promised good behaviour for the future, paid the expenses, and so were dismissed; having to be thankful that the Methodist preacher did not deem it needful, to send them to prison, as an example to others. Brave defenders of an Englishman's right to free speech were those early Methodist preachers, as well as loving to their worst enemies. Men of all classes owe them a debt of gratitude.

Mr. Mather however, when in 1768 appointed as Assistant to the Lancashire South Circuit, had no such battle again to fight. Others, including Mr. Wesley himself, had preceded him, and had acted in the same spirit by which he himself was influenced at Boston and other places. In Manchester, Methodism was beginning to be regarded as something not only to be tolerated, but which might possibly contain some elements of good, and as not absolutely inconsistent with respectability. The God-fearing among the clergy and laity of the Established Church, who had hastily accepted as true the vile calumnies circulated concerning this Methodism, had learned better. Many of these had read Mr. Wesley's able explanations and defence of the work of God, and were amazed to discover that his knowledge of Scripture, power of reasoning, command of language, control of temper, were equal to his loving zeal for God and souls. Such persons were led to abstain from opposition to a movement which was at any rate diminishing the

drunkenness, impurity, and profaneness of the country, if even they did not dare to countenance it. Many former opponents, moreover, were rendering help, to a smaller or larger extent. In most places comprised in the wide Circuit now placed under Mr. Mather's care, magistrates had learned that even Methodists had the common rights of British subjects; and the bigoted and the profligate had discovered that magistrates, willingly or unwillingly, must punish those who assaulted the unoffending, even if met to sing hymns and hear a sermon, and also those who pulled down property, though the building had been used for worship without gown, book, or bishop's leave. So in Manchester, Macclesfield, and elsewhere, Mr. Mather and his helpers laboured in peace and with considerable success. Macclesfield itself was preparing for speedy self-support.

When in March, 1768, Mr. Wesley visited Macclesfield, and other parts of the South Lancashire Circuit, he was impressed by the appearance of prosperity. At Manchester he met the stewards of the various Societies, and recorded:—"The times of outward distress are now over: God has given us plenty of all things." At Burslem there was a new preaching-house, and one at Congleton, but better contrived and better finished. There was a large one at New Mills, though then a small place. Mr. Wesley's penetrating eye observed one serious defect in that, and made this entry respecting it:—"I preached at noon in their large new chapel, which (in consideration that preaching-houses have need of air) has a casement in every window, three inches square! That is the custom of the country." At Macclesfield Mr. Wesley spent a whole Sunday, and seems to have preached but once. He heard two sermons at St. Michael's, both of which he declared to be

useful. Most likely during the intervals he would be meeting the Society. The congregation to which he preached in the evening was marvellously large, considering what the population of the town still was. There were "thousands upon thousands; and all were serious."

CHAPTER VIII.

MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT. 1770—1774.

AT the Conference of 1770, Macclesfield was made the head of a Circuit. For one year it appeared under the designation of "Cheshire South," as Manchester continued to be thus officially named "Lancashire South." But it is evident that the preachers and people generally employed the names "Macclesfield" and "Manchester." Thus the preacher appointed as Assistant to the "Cheshire South Circuit" writes in his autobiography:—"I spent one year at Manchester with Mr. Mather; we laboured together in love, and with some success. The year after I was appointed for Macclesfield Circuit, it being then (that is at Conference, 1770) separate from Manchester; and the blessing of God attended our labours." In "the Minutes" of 1771, the phraseology which had been generally used was officially adopted, and these Circuits were respectively designated "Manchester" and "Macclesfield." But it is clear that in 1770 Macclesfield had been really made the head of a Circuit, and the residence of two preachers, so far as such far-wandering itinerants could be said to have a residence. The portions of the Manchester South Circuit, with some sections, probably, of other Circuits which were assigned to Macclesfield,

occupied the area now included in the Leek, Buxton, Congleton, Burslem, Tunstall, Longton, Newcastle, Stafford, and Alderley Edge Circuits, and afforded ample scope for activity and zeal.

Robert Costerdine was the first "Assistant" resident in Macclesfield, and had as his helper William Linnell. Mr. Costerdine was not likely to be alarmed by the extent of his Round. Indeed it must have seemed to him a compact one. He would regard it as a farmer whose fields are enclosed in a "ring fence." Six years before he entered Macclesfield he had gone to Epworth as his first Circuit, which he found to be six hundred miles round, and to require twelve weeks to explore. Nor was the Macclesfield Superintendent likely to be dismayed or affrighted by any oppositions now to be encountered in Cheshire, Derbyshire, or Staffordshire. He had become inured to these. While in the Epworth Circuit he had often been followed by an enraged mob for a mile together, uttering loud oaths and curses, and only prevented from murdering him by fear of punishment. At Boston, where his late Superintendent, Mr. Mather, had so narrow an escape, he had been mobbed time after time during three months, until it seemed that the ruffians were fully persuaded that nothing which they dared to do would intimidate the Methodist preacher, and so allowed him to visit their town and preach unmolested. After Epworth Circuit, in 1764, and similar Rounds in following years, Macclesfield Circuit in 1770 would appear a neighbourhood dangerous only by reason of quiet, and even respect. Mr. George Pearson still survived, and was prospering; and Mr. and Mrs. Clulow were still able and willing to be succourers of the Lord's servants. Mr. Ryle was now gaining the esteem of even the chief people of the town;

and the members of the Society scattered over the area were numbered by hundreds. So, doubtless, Mr. Costerdine thanked the Giver of all good that the lines had fallen to him in places comparatively pleasant.

Whatever of hardness he had to endure during his stay in Macclesfield, and in future years, his constitution did not readily succumb thereto. When in his eighty-fourth year, and settled at Flixton, near Manchester, where the days of his childhood had been spent, he made a pleasing record concerning the sufficiency of God's grace. Many changes had taken place during the fourscore years which had elapsed since he first played in those fields and lanes; but the Lord had proved an unchangeable and all-sufficient Refuge and Friend. The aged disciple wrote: "About seven years ago, I buried a daughter, forty-seven years of age, who was well qualified to take care of me and my wife; and my wife died about fifteen months after. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.' Now I am left alone, with my mind brought down to my circumstances, willing to do and suffer the will of God. I feel that I have a little of heaven in possession, and, through infinite mercy, I am confident that I have in reversion the heaven of heavens.

"When I look back and consider the goodness of God in preserving me amidst all the dangers and difficulties to which I have been exposed, I am constrained to say, in the language of the Psalmist, 'Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.' When, after riding twenty, thirty, or forty miles in a day, I have been obliged to walk under a hedge to keep myself warm, the people having nothing but straw for fuel, I have been able to be comfortably resigned. I have loved, and I still love, God's people, and especially the

preachers of that Connexion to which I have been so long united. To them I would say, we are going to join those venerable men whose memory we revere, whose faith we profess, and whose holy lives we are bound to imitate. In a little while we shall enter into our rest, to join our fathers who have gone before us, and our old companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Mr. Costerdine was in his eighty-second year when he penned this remarkable testimony to the faithfulness of the covenant-keeping God whom he had so long served, often amid so much tribulation, yet sustained by Divine consolations. Two years longer was he detained in the neighbourhood where the time of his boyhood had been passed. He met his class the night before the seizure which proved fatal, and prayed in his family on the evening of the last Sabbath he spent on earth. Those around his dying-bed seemed to be allowed a foretaste of the joy on which their venerable friend was entering, and he thus happily entered the heavenly Zion. Among the many holy and noble men who assisted the Wesleys in the glorious revival of the eighteenth century, there were few whose names deserved a more grateful record than that of Robert Costerdine, the first Superintendent minister of the Macclesfield Circuit.

A Methodist, who herself adorned the Gospel of Christ, (Mrs. Birchenall,) was accustomed to narrate what doubtless she had heard from Mr. Costerdine himself. In one of the places where he occasionally preached, the congregation had been frequently much annoyed by a pack of hounds which were kennelled close by, and which the keeper habitually incited to bark and howl whenever the Methodists attempted to hold

any religious service. It was impossible to hear distinctly either sermon, prayer, or the relation of experience. At length Mr. Costerdine said to the people, "Let us earnestly commend this matter to God." They did so. Soon after, when one morning the keeper entered the kennels, he found the entire pack of hounds quite dead.

At the Conference of 1771, the name "Cheshire South" was changed to that of "Macclesfield Circuit," though there is no record of any alteration in the limits of the Round, or in the residence of any one of the three ministers. John Shaw was the Assistant, and was much beloved by the people, and honoured of God, in the various Circuits in which he travelled. Amid considerable bodily infirmity he toiled on in the Itinerancy, and death found him engaged in the blessed Master's work at Pocklington, in 1793, where he peacefully exchanged mortality for life. Samuel Smith, who was his senior colleague, was, at that time, very zealous and acceptable. Like many others, however, he found the hardships of the Itinerancy too much for his fortitude: he left the work, and a painful uncertainty rests on the state of his heart during his closing years.

The visit which Mr. Wesley paid to Macclesfield while good John Shaw was Assistant, was distinguished by a remarkable amount of work done by our founder on a certain Monday. When he last visited the town, as already stated, he enjoyed himself by hearing two useful sermons at St. Michael's, and seems to have preached but once, though then to an immense congregation. As though uneasy concerning such an inactive sojourn, on the next occasion he arranged to preach three times on Monday, besides travelling; and, as though Providence would afford him ample opportunity

of showing that he was not tired of his work, a fourth sermon, for which he had not arranged, was courteously afforded by him. So on this busy Monday he spoke "with all possible plainness" to a huge congregation at Derby at five o'clock, and preached again at nine to an immense crowd in the market-place at Ashbourn. While dining at Leek some gentlemen sent a request that Mr. Wesley would preach to them and their friends, and of course he did so. Then in the evening, at Macclesfield, the congregation was so solemnly attentive that he preached longer than he was wont. He must have been marvellously supported throughout the day, for he writes: "I felt no more weariness when I had done, than I did at six in the morning." It seems likely however that there was no preaching on Tuesday, but that, after a quiet day with the friends at Macclesfield, he rode leisurely to Congleton on Wednesday.

In 1772, those persons in Macclesfield who valued true evangelical religion were painfully reminded that there are other hindrances to its maintenance in Christian pulpits, besides those which are occasioned by the alliance of Church and State. The chapel in King Edward Street had been built in order that there the "truth as it is in Jesus" might be proclaimed in its pureness, unmingled with such remnants of Romanism as the founders of the chapel supposed still lingered in the Episcopal Church throughout the kingdom, and at St. Michael's in particular. But in 1772 the minister at the chapel, the Rev. J. Bolt, removed from the town, and was succeeded by the Rev. J. Palmer, concerning whose preaching there soon was painful misgiving felt by those whose glorying was in the cross of Christ. It was evident that he failed to set forth the Divinity, sacrifice, and mediation of the Redeemer; and it was difficult to

believe that he held orthodox views on these subjects. But he had become the authorized pastor of the church, and there were some who were pleased with the views he propounded, as apparently liberal and intellectual. So during a few years the congregation and church in King Edward Street were as fully and fiercely divided as the worshippers at St. Michael's were when the conflict between Prelacy and Presbyterianism was proceeding in the country.

At the Conference of 1773, Thomas Hanson was appointed as the Assistant at Macclesfield. He wrote concerning himself, "*I am but a brown-bread preacher;*" but it was very evident that there were many who liked the fare, whether it really was so plain or not. He added: "I have from my beginning thought myself the poor man's preacher; having nothing of politeness in my language, address, or anything else." He undoubtedly underrated himself, both as to "politeness" and preaching. Nor had he, at Macclesfield, to minister solely to poor people. There was one member of the Society already looked upon as suitable shortly to be Mayor of the town, and others who were to become aldermen in due time. But Mr. Hanson's ability and lowliness had their root alike in the soundness of his conversion to God. Of this he wrote: "On July 16th, 1757, at night, under my brother Joseph's prayer, I yielded, sunk, and as it were died away. My heart, with a kind struggle, melted into the hands of God. I was for some hours lost in wonder by the astonishing peace, love, and joy which flowed into my heart like a mighty torrent. When I came to recollect myself, I asked, 'What hast Thou done?' It was sweetly but deeply impressed, 'I have made thee Mine.' No tongue can tell what peace, love, joy, and assurance I then felt.

My willing heart and tongue replied, 'Hast Thou thus loved me? Here I am willing to spend and be spent for Thee.' God now gave me to see all creation, redemption, grace, and glory in a new light; and everything led me to love and praise Him."

The Rev. Samuel Bardsley was Mr. Hanson's senior colleague. He was widely known as a faithful servant of Christ, whose loving heart and voice gave special power to his ministrations, and made him a general favourite among the people. There was sufficient individuality, not to call it eccentricity, in him to distinguish him from other good men and Methodist preachers. At the time of his death, in 1818, he had been for some time the oldest Itinerant preacher in the Connexion. In the official record it was affirmed concerning him: "On his heart was deeply engraven the law of kindness, and his evenness and sweetness of temper were proverbial."

In this year, 1773, the people of Macclesfield received a very important benefit from Methodism, in an indirect manner, by the introduction of the Rev. David Simpson to the town. As we have already seen, Mr. Charles Roe, when visiting London, and especially when paying his addresses to Miss Stockdale, then a Methodist in London, had gone to hear the Wesleys and others. Mr. Roe never lost the convictions he then received. There can be no doubt that, however the worldliness of his heart prevailed, he had clear views of God's plan of saving sinners, and desired to hear the Gospel proclaimed. Years had elapsed since the death of his godly wife, and also since his brother James ceased to occupy the pulpit at St. Michael's.

During those years Mr. Charles Roe had been exceedingly prosperous. In the year 1756 he had

erected the first silk-mill that had ever existed in the town. In that undertaking he had displayed great skill and energy. There had been much opposition by those who desired to retain a monopoly of the silk trade, and many difficulties; but Mr. Roe persevered, and was successful. He had also engaged in other forms of enterprise. He was generally regarded as the most energetic and able man of business in Macclesfield, and one to whom the towns-people were largely indebted for more remunerative employment than they had been used to. Mr. Roe had a copper foundry on "the Common," on the site now occupied by the Baptist chapel, and for some years a copper coin bearing his effigy was a legal tender. Early in the present century the foundry, which had been disused, was supplied with benches and used as a Methodist preaching-room.

In 1770 the prosperous tradesman had "set up his carriage." This, in modern days, would have excited little attention; but Mr. Roe's carriage was something at which the burgesses and their apprentices looked with surprise. They well might. No other person in Macclesfield had a private carriage, and no resident had ever been known to possess one. This of course may be largely accounted for by the circumstance that good roads, suitable for vehicles, were few. On horseback, a person might travel anywhere in the kingdom, as bridle-roads, of a sort, abounded. But on wheels the traveller must keep to the few principal roads. Private carriages were therefore rare.

Mr. Roe, though the founder of the first silk-mill, and the proprietor of the first carriage, and the possessor of a considerable share of the wealth in the little corporate town, desired something more. He wished to

hear the Gospel as he used to do in London. To go to the little, mean, unauthorized chapel was not to be thought of, although Alderman Ryle did worship there. Think of a carriage, *the* carriage of Macclesfield, stopping at that shabby conventicle! As Mr. Roe could not go to the Gospel, and, according to his view, the Gospel was not clearly expounded at St. Michael's, the alternative was to find an authorized and respectable clergyman who might be appointed as junior curate at the church. Now there was a young man, duly ordained, not identified with the Wesleys, yet preaching with great plainness and power, of whom Mr. Roe had heard. It was also evident that, however useful he had been at Buckingham, the influential people there were determined not to tolerate what Mr. Roe desired. The young clergyman, driven from the church he had preached in for a time as curate, found a refuge with Mr. Roe, and, chiefly through his influence, was appointed as assistant curate at St. Michael's. In this transaction, we discern a little of what, throughout several years, was apparent in Mr. Roe, and at times conspicuously so,—an earnest desire for evangelical religion struggling, in the heart of the successful and proud man, with a still stronger desire for worldly wealth, distinction, and power. Though he despised Methodists, and afterwards for a season almost hated Methodism, yet in his invitation of Mr. Simpson to Macclesfield, and his immediate and subsequent patronage of that godly and zealous clergyman, he was unconsciously yielding to Methodistic influences, and furthering its prosperity in the town.

On Easter Sunday, April 3rd, 1774, a spectacle was seen in Macclesfield which must have appeared strange and perplexing to those who persisted in regarding Methodism as something to be treated with contempt,

if it might not be driven out of the land by zealous mobs, excited by supplies of strong drink. The new Mayor had been just elected, the election in those days taking place just before Easter. That honoured functionary was a Methodist! The burgesses and aldermen could discern that John Ryle was fitted for the civic chair, though he belonged to the sect still largely reviled. Mr. Ryle was a constant attendant at St. Michael's, his Methodism notwithstanding, and on this occasion complied with the long-established custom of formally going in procession with the corporation to that sanctuary. But a Methodist mayor of Macclesfield being escorted to church was not the entire wonder. The curate in charge, or "prime curate," as he was designated, the Rev. —— Henson, and his assistant curate, the Rev. David Simpson, who had only been a few months in the town, but whom some from his preaching began to suspect was a Methodist in disguise, walked in the procession, thus honouring the sectarian Mayor.

This did not complete the wonder. As Mr. Ryle had his friends, aldermen and others, with him, so the clergymen had a friend, a clerical friend, with them. This was no other than the man whom many regarded as the arch-schismatic of the times, the Rev. John Wesley himself. The occurrence would be a surprise to most who witnessed it, and not altogether otherwise to those concerned. Most likely the new Mayor had expressed his wish to be thus accompanied, and thus to recognise Mr. Wesley. On the preceding Wednesday the latter had arrived at Congleton. But he there found letters which satisfied him that his presence was indispensable at Bristol. That city is about a hundred and forty miles from Congleton, and there was no rail-

road; nor any mail-coach that would answer his purpose. Whether he walked on Sunday with the Mayor of Macclesfield or not, he must do the Lord's work at Bristol. He took a post-chaise, reached Bristol, did in two hours what was needful, started back to Congleton, and comforted the little flock in that town. On Sunday morning the corporation were waiting for the Mayor's directions, and the clergymen were preparing for church, and no Mr. Wesley! Just in time he arrived, however, and to everybody's astonishment,—evidently somewhat to his own,—he walks in procession to church with two clergymen and a Methodist mayor. It is probable that after such a marvellous spectacle there would in the evening be, once again, thousands upon thousands, to hear him preach in the open air. An effort was made by him to conduct service where there was abundant room; but the rain was so heavy as to render it impracticable. So, as many as could squeeze into "the house" did so, and, at the preaching, and afterwards at the meeting of the Society, "strong consolation" was given to those assembled. The Divine blessing was better than the morning's civic show.

Though both curates walked with Mr. Wesley in apparent friendliness with each other, manifesting respect to him, there were already the seeds of dissension between them. Mr. Simpson greatly admired Mr. Wesley, and heartily wished him success in his evangelical work; and he preached the same glorious doctrine of a penitent sinner's justification by faith. Mr. Henson regarded the Methodist movement as largely partaking of both heresy and schism; and was still more annoyed at the great and augmenting popularity of his assistant. A rupture soon took place.

Mr. Simpson was invited to preach an annual club-sermon. Mr. Henson, as "prime" curate, forbade his doing so, and arranged to preach the sermon himself. Mr Simpson, though a young and ardent man, had too much good sense to feel any great annoyance at this. The people, however, were enraged at Mr. Henson's procedure. When they saw him enter the pulpit, many hurried tumultuously out of the church, waiting however in the grave-yard until the service was over. When the prime curate left the church, he was hooted, much in the manner the poor Methodist preachers had been a few years previously.

Mr. Charles Roe warmly defended Mr. Simpson in subsequent disputes concerning his preaching, but it was evident that the evangelical curate would not much longer be allowed to occupy the pulpit of St. Michael's. Mr. Roe possessed large wealth, and would not be mastered. So, when Mr. Wesley visited Macclesfield, twelve months after the Mayor's procession, the foundation of a new church had been laid. This was to be built with Mr. Roe's money, was to be his property, was to be occupied by Mr. Simpson, and to be designated "Christ's-church." Though a very spacious structure, it was completed in nine months, and opened on Christmas-day, 1775.

CHAPTER IX.

HESTER ANN ROE. 1774—1778.

EARLY one morning, in the Spring of 1774, a young lady might have been seen approaching the little Methodist chapel as though afraid of being observed. The service was to commence at five o'clock so that there was not much danger of many persons being in the streets except those who were, like her, going to the preaching. Yet it was apparent that she did not desire to have any intercourse with these. On arriving at the chapel she glanced around the place with the uncertainty of a stranger, selected a seat where she was least likely to be noticed, and hastily placed herself therein, attracting as little attention as possible.

Her presence however on that occasion would certainly not fail to furnish the subject of much pleasurable gossip among the Methodists of Macclesfield for that and following days. She was the daughter of the late clergyman, and niece to the great man who had lately set up a chariot of his own, and was likely to be numbered among the grandees of the land. What could Miss Hester Roe mean by coming to the Methodist chapel for the five o'clock preaching? Did her friends know of her procedure? What would her uncle say, if he found it out? Poor girl, she greatly needed

Divine comfort, if any one could point out to her how she could obtain it. She was only in her nineteenth year, yet had already passed through exercises of mind concerning her soul which had been indescribably distressing. Never before had she been in the Methodist chapel. She had been taught to believe that a Methodist was a vile person, with the additional guilt of wearing a cloak of hypocrisy. Once she had fully held this opinion ; but recollections of her aunt Charles, and enlarged information, had considerably shaken her prejudices. Besides, she was in such great distress concerning her guilt and depravity, and the awful peril to which she was thus exposed, that she was ready to seek relief anywhere. So, in accordance with the advice of one who appeared to enjoy religion, she, without making any promise, resolved to hear for herself, and selected the five o'clock service, as her visit at that hour might not be observed.

The preacher was Samuel Bardsley. Perhaps some of his hearers might think at times that the designation was appropriate to him which his Superintendent, Mr. Hanson, applied to himself, that of a "brown-bread" preacher. But they were both men of deep piety, thoroughly acquainted with God's Word, and practically familiar with the plan of salvation, and they both were enabled by God to set forth "the bread of Life" before their hearers. Thus it proved at that early preaching when Miss Roe listened, hoping nobody noticed her. Mr. Bardsley's text that morning was, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God," and the subject was one in which he would find special delight. To Miss Roe it seemed as though the Methodist preacher knew all the secret workings of her heart. He pointed sinners, such sinners as she ranked herself with, to the

Lamb of God, on whom our iniquities were laid. She was much comforted. The prejudice against the Methodists, which had of late been weakened, was entirely and for ever banished. She returned to her home saying to herself:—"These are the people of God, and they show in truth the way to salvation."

Miss Roe had from childhood been a subject of religious impressions. Her parents had taught her to pray, and fear God. When not more than four years old, she strove to tell her wants to the Lord. When five, she was deeply affected by the sight of a little brother's lifeless body, and resolved to get ready to die. When eight, she heard with hushed breath concerning her father's remarkable dream. In another year, she received his dying admonition, and purposed to live so as to meet him in heaven. When thirteen years old, her religious feelings were revived at a Confirmation-service, held in Macclesfield by the Bishop of Chester; and soon after, when recovering from a malignant fever, she cried mightily to God. But these purposes to be the Lord's had been overcome by the "love of the world." Her widowed mother saw no reason for what she regarded as Puritanical strictness: her ambition was that her children should be admired, and secure a good position in society. It was therefore not surprising that Hester Ann, when emerging from childhood, should be led away from seriousness of thought and deportment, and induced to seek gratification in the world as others did. Though the daughter of a deceased clergyman, who with his last breath had warned his family against forgetting God, and choosing their portion in this life, no one thought it unbecoming that they should go to balls and dances, or play at cards.

Hester Ann appears to have been a great favourite

with her godmother, who was a lady of some position. Mrs. Leigh of Adlington was a person of distinction, and doubtless it was thought a great favour when she consented to be one of the sponsors at the baptism of the clergyman's little girl. Mrs. Leigh lived on her family estate, and kept a chariot, with a suitable retinue of servants. It is probable that her carriage suggested to Hester Ann's uncle that a coach would be conducive to his ease and dignity, if he should ever think it prudent to incur such expense; and also suggested the sort of equipage with which, as we have seen, he did lead the way among his fellow-townsmen in this form of luxury. It does not appear, however, that the grand lady at Adlington had the faintest conception that she had taken on herself an obligation to do her utmost to lead the dear child, for whom she had stood sponsor, to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, with all the lusts of the flesh. Hester Ann became one of her pets, and was not unfrequently invited to stay with her at "the Hall;" but was never there urged to yield her youthful heart to Christ. In the midst of much frivolity the girl was arrested by a dream, which was at once awful and encouraging. She, with her cousins Mary, Frances, and Robert, were placed for judgment before God's throne, and were trembling in anticipation of their awful doom, when the angel, who approached them, said, "The Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven all your sins, and washed you in His own blood; and I am come to bid you enter into the joy of your Lord, and to conduct you to His blissful presence." Once again Hester Ann tried to serve God, and began to keep a journal to help her in doing so; until, one day, while at a dancing party, she drew out her diary from her pocket with her handkerchief. The

book was found, and made a subject of much merriment by the company. So, as poor Miss Roe had not made up her mind to renounce her worldly associates and practices, she gave up, for the time, her half-hearted attempt to be religious.

In the summer of 1773, while visiting at Adlington, she heard that her Uncle Roe had invited a clergyman to Macclesfield who was "as bad as any Methodist," even if he was not a secret adherent of the Wesleys. It was said that he denounced, as being evil, plays, and novels, and dancing, and all such amusements. Miss Roe, like many of her friends, was greatly annoyed by this. Dancing especially she delighted in, and tried, though not to her own satisfaction, to justify. On her return home, however, she was deeply awakened by Mr. Simpson's preaching, and again strove, but in vain, to find peace. One morning, without telling her mother, she destroyed all the finery in which she had prided herself, including some "high dressed caps," cut her hair short, and in the most solemn manner vowed that she would never dance again. Yet she found no permanent rest to her soul. Afterwards she regretted that she had not been led sooner among the Methodists; but God graciously guided her to the chapel on the morning referred to, and Hester Ann, perceiving that there she would obtain the instruction and aid she needed, resolved that she would, at all risks, cast in her lot with the despised people. This resolution was confirmed as she pleaded before God.

As soon as it was discovered that Hester had been to hear the Methodist preachers, her mother was greatly enraged. It was not enough that she continued to attend St. Michael's regularly, and in all things behaved as a loving and dutiful child. She must promise that she would never again so degrade herself and disgrace her

family. When Miss Roe declined to make such promise, her mother would have expelled her from the house had it not been for her uncle Roe, who, though he afterwards acted with strange inconsistency by driving his own sons from home for the same offence, now induced Hester's mother to reconsider her decision. Eventually Miss Roe asked to be allowed to remain at home as a menial servant, rather than seek a similar situation elsewhere; and her mother consented, believing that drudgery and hardship would subdue her daughter's will. In about seven months after this arrangement had been made, and Hester Ann's health had been much enfeebled, Mrs. Roe was taken ill. Her loving daughter toiled and watched by her bedside, until she was too ill to do so. The medical adviser spoke to Mrs. Leigh, declaring that, if Miss Roe's life was to be spared, she must at once be cared for. So the godmother's chariot was sent, and the youthful invalid conveyed for a time to Adlington.

Meanwhile her uncle had much difficulty in guiding his own family along that middle path between Christ and the world in which he desired they should walk. Influenced by Mr. Simpson, Mr. Charles Roe wished that worldly amusements should be kept in much narrower limits than the leading families of Macclesfield had been used to, Hester Ann's mother among the rest. But some of his children, including Mary, and Frances, and, for a time, Charles, were disposed to "go too far," and lean to Methodism, while his youngest son Robert, (afterwards driven from home by his father for becoming a Methodist), who was now preparing for college-life at Oxford, was exasperated at the cessation of cards, and dancing, and frolic; and was vexed with his sisters, his father, his cousin Hester Ann, and Mr. Simpson. So,

though Mr. Charles Roe, sen., who had wondrously succeeded in business, had set up a chariot of his own, and had been lauded as the founder of Christ-church,—which building was likely to pay well as a money speculation besides,—had kept the safe path of compromise, it is evident he had much perplexity at times.

At the Conference of 1775, Mr. Duncan Wright was appointed as Assistant at Macclesfield, in which post he remained two years. Mr. Wright had been a soldier for several years. When first employed as a Methodist preacher he was stationed in Ireland. One or two circumstances he recorded may be interesting. He writes:—"We had a little Society in the county of Wexford, who used to be much pestered by a Popish mob. They met in a large barn, with the door near one end. The rabble wanted sadly to know what they did at their private meetings; but, as the barn belonged to one who was no Methodist, they durst not break open the door. At length they contrived that one of them should get into the barn, before the people came, and let his companions in at a proper time. To conceal himself the better, he got into a sack, and lay down behind the door. When the Society were all in, they fastened the door as usual. Soon after came the mob: hallooing and shouting to their friend to let them in, but God found other work for him; for being charmed with the first hymn, he thought it a thousand pities (as he afterwards said) to disturb them while singing it. And when the prayer began the power of God did so confound him, that he roared out with might and main; and, not having power to get out of the sack, lay bawling and screaming. At last one ventured to see what was the matter, and, helping him out, brought him up, confessing his sins and crying for

mercy; which was the beginning of a lasting work in his soul."

"A party of the Light Horse, being on foot, were conveying one of the Whiteboys to Kilkenny gaol. In going through a village the Papists crossed their path with a mock funeral. When they had got the soldiers in the midst, they threw down their coffin full of stones, and fell on old and young with the greatest fury. The soldiers defended themselves, till the sergeant and three or four more were killed, and several desperately wounded. For this, five of them (the insurgents) were hanged at Kilkenny. They all died 'innocent,' they said, 'as the child unborn.' So did five more who were executed a little before, for burning a mill, and burying the miller up to the neck. I could not understand at first how most of the Papists that die here by the hands of the executioner, die declaring their innocence, till I found out the secret: having confessed all their crimes to the priest, and received his absolution, they believed themselves guiltless, and were forbidden to make confession to the heretics."

Mr. Wright, brought in God's Providence from the army, and from Ireland, was made very useful in Macclesfield. Like many of the early Methodist Preachers he gave special prominence in his preaching to the doctrine of Christian Perfection, and succeeded in leading the people under his charge to seek enlargement in the things of God. He was associated with Mr. T. Hanby, who had previously escaped so narrowly from the mob at Burton-on-Trent, but now in the Macclesfield Circuit enjoyed much peace and many comforts, with abundant toil.

Mr. Wesley's visit to Macclesfield had now become annual. In 1776 he arrived on Monday, April 1st, and

preached in "the house." That was found however to be to too strait for the congregation, which was no wonder, considering its small dimensions. On the following evening he preached on the Parsonage Green, near Mr. Ryle's door, recording, "There are no mockers here, and scarce an inattentive hearer. So mightily has the word of God prevailed." Had there remained any evil-disposed opponents, Mr. Wesley's proximity to the house of a Methodist Alderman and ex-Mayor might have been a protection. During this visit Mr. Wesley had an interview with Miss Roe, who had partially recovered from the ill-effects of hardships to which she had not been inured, and of the loving efforts to save her mother when in fever. The young lady was pleasingly impressed by our Founder's gentleness and wisdom, and acknowledged his kindness in writing to her soon afterwards concerning religion. But Mr. Wesley was mistaken in believing her to be in a consumption, as he also was when he prepared his own epitaph very many years before it was needed.

The Methodists of Macclesfield, as elsewhere, by the direction of our Founder, abstained from holding any religious service during church-hours; and, with some exceptions, they attended, regularly and devoutly, the service held in the parish-church. But since the erection of Christ-church, there was a choice of places episcopally consecrated. As might have been expected, the Methodists went to hear Mr. Simpson. They had been often blessed under his ministrations while he officiated as junior curate at St. Michael's, and there was surely nothing irregular in their following him to the new building. Their doing so received the marked sanction of Mr. Wesley on the occasion of his visit in 1777. He had previously worshipped at the old church, but had



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not been asked to preach there. But Mr. Simpson, with the permission of his patron, we may conclude, invited Mr. Wesley to occupy his pulpit. So, instead of a crowd in the open air, there was a crowd in the new church; which building greatly pleased Mr. Wesley. He wrote:—"The new church here is far the most elegant that I have seen in the kingdom." To the people of Macclesfield the novelty of the structure was beginning to wear off. To them it was a greater spectacle, to some of them a very pleasing one, to see Mr. Wesley welcomed by a clergyman to the pulpit of an episcopal church in their town.

At the Conference of 1777, John Shaw was re-appointed as Assistant in the Macclesfield Circuit, though five years only had elapsed since he had ceased to occupy that position. Mr. Shaw on this occasion remained two years as the Superintendent. One of his colleagues, Jasper Robinson, during several years previous to his being numbered among the Itinerant Preachers, had devoted a great part of his time to preaching and visiting in the neighbourhood of Leeds, where he lived.

Mr. Shaw was a man of large physical proportions, and never shrank from what he saw to be his duty, yet he was naturally exceedingly nervous. He persevered in the work amid hardships and perils to the period of his death, yet was easily alarmed. As a somewhat ludicrous instance of childish dread of small things associated with the manly endurance of trials in the path of acknowledged duty, the following circumstance may be mentioned. On one occasion, when he returned home from Circuit work, he was unwell. A hot foot-bath was ordered. Of this he was greatly afraid, though it is difficult to conceive why. He protested vehemently against the proposed infliction. An elderly

dame, blunt and sturdy, who helped Mrs. Shaw in household tasks assisted in this. As Mr. Shaw hesitated, she seized his legs and thrust them down, he piteously exclaiming, like a frightened child, "I shall die,—I am going!"; and, as the dreaded plunge took place, "Its all over!—I'm gone"!

In the Spring of 1778, Mr. Wesley was in such haste to reach Ireland that, though he passed through Macclesfield about the season the Methodists there began to look for him, he had no time either to preach or meet the Society.

On Sunday forenoon September 13, 1778, an earthquake of unusual violence was experienced in this country. Its force in Macclesfield was such as to make the stoutest hearts tremble. Many supposed that the end of the world had arrived, and that Christ was coming to judge our race. The Methodists of Macclesfield were, at the time, mostly with their friends in Christ-church, attending the ministrations of Mr. Simpson. He was standing near the communion-table, and, retaining his calmness, endeavoured to quiet the people. But the church vibrated throughout, and to its foundations. The noise for some moments was like thunder. The people who were kneeling had difficulty in keeping themselves from being thrown on the ground. Fearing that the steeple and roof would fall, the timid ran shrieking to the entrances. Many were thrown down and trampled on, and the screams waxed louder, until the confusion and terror became indescribable. There were those, however, who were kept throughout the whole in perfect peace, their minds being stayed on the Lord; and others, who were greatly terrified, afterwards sought refuge in God's mercy, and gave evidence of a real conversion from sin to holiness.

Mr. Simpson afterwards referred to this as the third and latest period of extensive awakening among his hearers. When the task of an eminently successful minister has been completed, those who succeed to the toil are apt to think that their honoured predecessor was favoured with unvaried success. Mr. Simpson towards the close of his life, spoke of much painful discouragement, stating however that there had been three periods when the Gospel as ministered by him did receive large attention; first, when he entered Macclesfield as a stranger, and the message he uttered was novel; secondly, when Christ-church was opened, and many exulted in thus gaining that for which they had contended; and, thirdly, during months immediately following the earthquake.

In the year 1750, one of the Wesleys had published a sermon with the somewhat remarkable title, "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes." We may reasonably suppose that this discourse would be largely read in 1778 by their followers. The shock however, does not seem to have been severely felt where Mr. John Wesley was at the time: while Mr. Simpson was endeavouring to calm his terror-stricken audience, our Founder had "a comfortable opportunity" in the Room at Bristol.

CHAPTER X.

A HOUSE DIVIDED. 1778—1779.

AT the Conference of 1778, Jeremiah Brettell was appointed to the Macclesfield Circuit as the junior preacher, Mr. Shaw remaining as Assistant. At this time Mr. Brettell spent two years in this Round, and three years more on a subsequent appointment, commencing in 1799. An incident in his life illustrates how Methodism extended from place to place. Though the cause had already taken strong root in some parts of Staffordshire, where persecution had been severe, it was unknown in Stafford itself. Dr. Coke,—who in 1777 was dismissed from his curacy and fully identified himself with the Wesleys,—accompanied by Mr. Jeremiah Brettell, was passing through Stafford; and, as they had no friends to entertain them, they stayed at an inn to dine. While at dinner the bellman was sent round the town announcing that "the Rev. Dr. Coke, from Oxford, was going to preach in the Market-place." At the hour appointed the Doctor mounted on a table which Mr. Brettell had carried from the inn for the purpose. For some time the people gazed at the two from a distance, apparently doubting whether it would prove safe to approach those who could be guilty of such insane proceedings. After due consideration, they

gradually drew near, perhaps encouraged by augumented numbers. The crowd listened with attention, and some appeared impressed by Dr. Coke's address. When all was over, and the two preachers were preparing to leave Stafford, some persons who had followed them to the inn asked them to come and preach again. Their request was gladly acceded to. A small Society was soon afterwards formed, and henceforth, until the Circuit was divided, Stafford was part of the Macclesfield Round.

While Mr. Brettell was in the Circuit good Elizabeth Clulow employed a carefully-devised and loving stratagem, to bring her son John to religious decision. He afterwards became an able and successful solicitor, and, during many years, was Town-clerk of Macclesfield, and a man of some importance. He never became a Methodist, yet was wondrously attached to Methodism. When Mr. Brettell arrived at the Circuit as junior preacher, John Clulow was about eighteen years of age, spirited, affectionate to his mother, somewhat gifted, zealous for Methodism after his fashion, but seeking his chief delight in earthly things. His godly mother had taken John regularly to the little chapel, had entreated him to yield his youthful heart to the Saviour, and had earnestly pleaded with God on his behalf. Among John's early recollections would be the winning words and glance of Mr. Wesley himself. But he was rapidly becoming a gay and worldly young man. It occurred to his mother that if her son were for a season separated from his worldly associates, and placed in agreeable intercourse with one of those Methodist preachers whose sermons and conversation were made such a blessing to herself, he would certainly be "brought in." Happy would it have been for the son had the mother's plan been successful.

Of course, that he might be induced to regard the arrangement with favour, it must be made pleasant to him. So Jeremiah Brettell, the youngest of the three preachers was selected as his companion; and the proposal was made that John should accompany him throughout an entire round of the Circuit, which could then be accomplished in six weeks. Mr. Brettell would have the Circuit horse, and John also should be provided with a steed. As a further inducement to her son, the worthy woman bought for him a new saddle and bridle that he might appear respectable.

Young Clulow gave a ready consent to the arrangement. He, no doubt, discerned to a considerable extent what his mother was aiming at in all this; but a tour through the country on horseback could not be despised by a youth of eighteen, to say nothing of the handsome saddle and bridle. Besides, in his heart, he believed that, beyond all disputation, the form of religion by which his mother's character had been moulded, and which had commended itself to his own judgment, was the best under the sun. But for certain desires and appetites, which he indulged without justifying, he would have been a Methodist altogether long before. Then the young preacher, his intended companion, was also a favourite. So, though perceiving that his mother and the three preachers were plotting for his conversion, he would venture. If they succeeded no harm would be done.

Alas, the kindly stratagem of good Mrs. Clulow was frustrated. Mr. Brettell and John left Macclesfield in good humour and high spirits, each one after his own fashion, and both were commended to God by the pious mother. All seemed to go on favourably for a time. It does not seem that Mrs. Clulow had been so indiscreet

as to entrust the young man with much money; most likely his companion was purse-bearer. It so happened, however, that in one of the towns they visited, while the young preacher was attending to his pastoral duties, and John was having a stroll, the latter met with some of his "jolly" friends from Macclesfield or the vicinity. They were mutually surprised at the meeting, and proceeded to an inn that they might make and receive needful explanations. There John Clulow got more wine than was good for him, and returned in an excited state. Poor Mr. Brettell endeavoured to control him, but was unable. John would return to his friends instead of going to the preaching. Eventually he became thoroughly intoxicated, and determined to stay no longer with the Methodist preacher. So he went to the inn, ordered his horse, and set off. At each toll-gate, and at several cottages, on his way home, he perpetrated some freak or practical joke, which to his wine-excited brain seemed clever, but which, when considered afterwards, was condemned as miserably senseless. The sad failure of that motherly and affectionate device was, to John Clulow,—though he subsequently became a man of mark,—and to others whom he might have benefited, an incalculable loss.

At the very time that good Elizabeth Clulow was greatly troubled because her son would not become a thorough Methodist like herself, her rich townsman, Charles Roe, was distressed beyond measure because some of his children had become such. He was specially grieved on this account in reference to Joseph and Robert. Charles Roe had himself, as we have seen, become dissatisfied with the religion of late commended at St. Michael's, and had resolved that he and his family should have something more Scriptural set

before them. For this purpose he had caused Christ-church to be built, and Mr. Simpson, who would no longer be tolerated by the authorities at Prestbury and St. Michael's, to be appointed its minister. He had discountenanced some forms of worldly amusement which had been regarded by most people, since the Puritans were expelled from the Established Church, as harmless. Indeed such was his respect for Mr. Wesley, both on account of the high opinion of him cherished by the late Mrs. Roe, and also on account of what he had himself heard from him, that he was willing that Mr. Simpson should invite him to preach in Christ-church when he visited Macclesfield. Mr. Roe was also very anxious that his children, especially his sons, should be kept from the vicious gratifications which might be proffered to them as they entered on manhood, and when they either went to Oxford or took their places among business men. For some time he was afraid that Robert would refuse to walk in the paths which had been made straiter since the mother's death and Mr. Simpson's arrival in the town. But at the same time he was utterly unwilling that any of his children should become Methodists.

To his inexpressible mortification three of his sons, as well as two of his daughters, declared their determination to cast in their lot with the poor and despised people; affirming that among them they had obtained good, and found opportunities for benefiting others, and sustaining the Divine life within their own hearts, such as even Mr. Simpson's ministrations did not provide. Robert had a severe mental struggle before he fully decided for Christ. At first the young man was enraged with all who had had anything to do with marring his pleasures by introducing this "new and

Methodistic state of things." He was specially vexed that his cousin Hester Ann should have proved "such a simpleton." But he became very uneasy concerning his own soul. He was much impressed one day while Mr. Simpson, in conversation, referred to his sainted mother. Still, when he returned to the Grammar School in Manchester, Robert was undecided. His acquaintances called him a Methodist because of his seriousness and scrupulousness, while he was conscious that he neither had any Divine peace, nor was yielding himself to God. When he went to Oxford he was afraid of losing his good impressions, and, in consequence of his half-heartedness, he did partially lose them. During the "long vacation," however, and while at his father's house in Macclesfield, he was led to seek God with all his heart, and went to a Class-meeting as one earnestly "desiring to flee from the wrath to come," and to be saved from his sins. Though as yet without any assurance of God's favour, he enrolled himself among the Methodists.

Mr. Roe was greatly disturbed concerning this conduct on the part of his children. It is indisputable that he greatly loved them, but his affection was that of one whose heart was chiefly influenced by the things of time. His worldliness was exceedingly prudent and far-seeing; yet it did not cease to be worldliness. He did not overlook the realities of the unseen state, and anxiously desired, for himself and his, a large reversionary interest in the blessedness there prepared for the faithful. But such reversion, whether greater or smaller, more or less certain, must be reconciled with the enjoyment of position, wealth, and reputation here. Mr. Roe had been eminently successful. Most things he touched seemed to turn into gold: it was even

whispered that the new church was likely to prove a very profitable investment. His friends declared that he had built the spacious sacred edifice in pursuance of a vow made in early life. But the shrewder of his acquaintances calculated the price at which he sold or let the pews, the probable income from the burial-ground, and the advantage of turning the pasture ground around the church into building-sites. The value of his estate thereabouts was enhanced incalculably: all things belonging to him, even his goodness, seemed to add to his revenue.

There was no doubt that Mr. Roe could help on his children in this world, and intended them to be people of position. Robert was intended for the Church. It would be easy for his father to secure his promotion. Why should he not become a dignitary in the Establishment? Even a bishopric might perhaps be attainable in due time, and Robert's influence might thus still be exerted for good, as the father congratulated himself that his own had been. At one time Robert appeared likely to frustrate such designs by reason of his preference to balls, dancing, and other forms of gaiety. Now, with his brothers, he had rushed to the other extreme—had turned Methodist! What could be done?

In this difficulty Mr. Roe took counsel, as was natural, with Mr. Simpson; who undertook to do his utmost to induce the young people to comply with their father's wishes. He would doubtless strive to show them that they had better endeavour to serve God without having any connection with the Methodists. Mr. Simpson would certainly believe that in doing this he was acting aright. He would naturally think that, irrespective of their parent's wish, the young men would be better cared for at the new church than at the shabby

little meeting-house. The contrast in the buildings was great. Christ-church was one of the most beautiful and commodious places of worship in the kingdom, while the chapel was such a structure that the Methodists themselves were ashamed of it, and were determining to replace it by a better as soon as possible. Then the buildings, in Mr. Simpson's estimation, must have represented the difference of the ministrations therein. If Mr. Wesley had preached regularly, though in a barn, Mr. Simpson would have acknowledged the wisdom of those who left Christ-church to hear him. But he only came at most once a year. Were not the Itinerant Preachers uneducated men? What was the preaching when these were absent on their rounds? How could men, however pious, preach, who were mending shoes, or patching clothes, or ploughing fields, six days out of seven. Besides, if Mr. Simpson had lowly views of his own ministrations, there were the prayers and sacraments, with a most efficient choir. It must be better, he would hold, for young people of culture to repress any mere temporary whim, and keep to that which permanently they must needs prefer. Besides, admitting that his youthful friends were correct in believing that among the Methodists they found some special spiritual aid, were they justified on that account in disobeying their father? Good Mr. Simpson accordingly did his utmost to persuade Mr. Roe's children to renounce the association which they had formed.

During the summer of 1776, Mr. Roe had to make up his mind what he would do in the case of those who declared that, with regard to their connection with Methodism they dared not yield to his wishes. He knew that, in the most dutiful and loving manner, they

had repeatedly assured him that they would submit to his direction in everything which was consistent with their views of right: but two of the sons, Joseph and Robert, had finally declined to withdraw from the Methodists. Charles had fallen in with his father's views, and speedily began to manifest a disposition to indulge in worldly amusements from which his prudent parent would gladly have restrained him. Joseph and Robert, however, remained inflexible in their determination. Mr. Roe must therefore decide what course he would pursue in their case, and that of any one or more of their sisters who might manifest similar firmness of purpose. He had, hitherto, been proud of his children: his wealth was more prized by him on their account. What line of action must he now adopt?

About two years previously he had acted kindly and wisely in the case of his niece Hester Ann. When her mother had resolved to expel Miss Roe from her home because she persisted in being a Methodist, Mr. Charles interceded on her behalf, and succeeded so far that she was allowed to remain at home in the capacity of a servant. But now that a similar test was applied to his own moderation, he acted in a very different spirit. He commanded the offenders to leave his house, and never re-enter it or regard it as their home, until they had abandoned the Methodists altogether. In these very painful and perplexing circumstances Mr. Simpson manifested much generosity and wisdom. The two young men went to his house for counsel and help, though fully determined to remain faithful to the people of their choice. Mr. Simpson repaired to their father, and endeavoured to calm his excitement and displeasure, reasoning with him on grounds that could not be denied: it would certainly be well that the evil should be kept

within the narrowest possible limits: the two sons were not criminals nor profligates; might he not afford them shelter until some arrangement could be made? Even admitting that the father's decision was irreversible, and that the sons would not change their determination, it would be better that the people of Macclesfield should know as little of the affair as possible. To this Mr. Roe assented; and eventually the young men left Macclesfield, receiving at times some little pecuniary aid from their father in an indirect manner. The association of the cousins Roe with the Society must have much interested the Macclesfield Methodists at this time.

Mr. Robert Roe, after being expelled from his father's home, pursued his studies at Oxford. For some time he had to endure much persecution from the undergraduates and others. This, however, subsided considerably, and he gained the respect even of those who occasionally sought to drive him from Methodism by ridicule or threats. He spent the vacations among friends who were led by God's providence to offer him hospitality. An aunt of his in London, who was a Methodist, welcomed him to her home. He thus had the opportunity of hearing Mr. Wesley when in London, and was introduced to him. Long, however, did he grope his way in darkness of soul. He was slow to apprehend the plan of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and doubtless felt it hard to be excluded from the roof and denied the affection of his earthly father, without enjoying any happy assurance of God's mercy. But the Holy Spirit was leading the contrite sinner towards the Saviour, and he was eventually made happy in the love of God.

About Christmas 1777, he was painfully disappointed by being officially informed that the authorities of his

College would not give him the credentials necessary to his ordination as deacon, or to his entrance into any other college. The Principal and others testified in a full, though informal, manner to the diligence he had manifested as a student, and to his ability and general excellence. Their sole objection to him they declared to be his connection with Methodism. Lengthy and repeated conversations took place, from which it was evident that they highly esteemed him, and wished that, with this one exception, the undergraduates in general were like him; but his attendance at unauthorized worship was a fault which could not be overlooked. On the other hand Robert repeatedly declined to give any promise that he would renounce his connection with the Methodists. So he was praised for his general worth, but refused the needful document.

The greater part of the year 1778 was spent by the persecuted youth among his friends, endeavouring to get and do good, and hoping that the way would be made clear to him. His unwise father seems to have used his utmost influence to induce his son to submit; and also, at the same time, to secure such pressure on the College authorities that, if Robert would not yield, they might do so, that the family might not be disgraced by such an unsatisfactory termination of his son's Oxford career. In both endeavours, however, he was disappointed. During the summer Robert's step-mother wrote to him a kind letter, assuring him that they should be glad to see him at home, if he would pledge himself not to go among the Methodists. To this condition he would not consent, and the door therefore still remained closed. He then went to Bristol and attended the Conference services there; and then proceeded to Oxford, where he presented himself

for further examination. The Proctor informed him that the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors had decided that nothing could be done, for he could not swear to the articles till the College "passed his grace." A friend who had accompanied him, said, "Now, Mr. Roe, is your time to recant. Promise to forsake the Methodists, and you will be preferred immediately." He replied, "While I have breath, and see things as I do, I never will." Soon afterwards he resolved that he would venture home unsolicited. He did so. His father was out, but all the rest of the family received him kindly. Robert dreaded his father's entrance. At length the much-loved and much-feared parent entered and welcomed his long absent son with much affection. But the test had not yet been applied. Sunday arrived. Robert purposed to go to church, both for personal benefit from good Mr. Simpson's ministrations, and to gratify his father. But there was early service in the Methodist chapel. Thither he went. Mr. Shaw, the Assistant, preached. After the service, and before church-time, Robert returned home, but was told at the door that he must not enter. His father had forbidden his admission. He was very sorrowful, yet Divinely sustained. He went to a Methodist family, where prayer was made on his behalf, and then the friends went with him to hear Mr. Simpson, and were comforted. His aunt, though she once treated her own daughter so harshly on account of her connection with Methodism, now allowed him to spend the evening at her house.

Robert Roe at this time spent several months in Macclesfield. He was in a state of great debility, and appeared likely to sink into consumption. He appears to have found a home with Mr. John Barber, and there

had the gratification of occasionally seeing those who loved him, though they dared not openly acknowledge him. Mrs. Clulow, pained concerning her own son, and pleading with God on his behalf, endeavoured to give suitable counsel and comfort to the sorrowing young man. He was induced occasionally to lead Mrs. Clulow's class, and to exhort sinners to repentance as opportunity offered.

When Mr. Wesley visited Macclesfield on Tuesday March 30, 1779, he found that the Society was increasing both in numbers and strength. During the public service which he conducted the hearts of many were enlarged. There was also a pleasant gathering at Mr. Ryle's house. Preachers from the neighbourhood had been invited: it must have been to them a high festival to gather in the residence of an ex-Mayor, and to converse with Mr. Wesley himself. Among the guests was Robert Roe, who greatly enjoyed that sweet season of converse and prayer, and could have wept when Mr. Wesley departed.

There was at this time some hope that the Bishop of Lincoln would ordain Mr. Robert without demanding any pledge concerning renunciation of Methodistic practices and associations. By this the father was so far gratified as to send needful messages to his son. But there was no invitation to his house. As an ordained clergyman Charles Roe doubtless believed that his son might be more pliant, and would certainly be more reputable. For the present the chief direction which by messengers he urged on the banished one was that he should leave Macclesfield. To this Robert at length consented, and bade farewell to the people he deeply loved.

CHAPTER XI.

FIRST SUNDERLAND STREET CHAPEL.

1779—1780.

AT the Conference of 1779, Mr. John Brettell joined his brother in Macclesfield. The brothers had previously laboured together in Ireland, having the town of Lisburn as the centre of their operations. They had manifested such affectionate union of spirit with each other, and had worked so zealously and successfully in Ireland, that Mr. Wesley appointed them as colleagues in England. Mr. John Brettell was the Assistant. His brother, the previous year, though appointed on the Minutes to Macclesfield, had been directed to supply for Mr. Hanby at Liverpool, and consequently several months elapsed before he reached his own Circuit. The brother, being in charge of the Circuit, was no doubt sent at once to Macclesfield.

The brothers had become inured to toil while in Ireland, and had, at times, experienced fierce opposition. They found that, in their new Circuit, they would still have some need of fortitude and endurance. In the fulfilment of their appointed work, they had to travel through a considerable part of three or four counties; and, though in Macclesfield itself they were respected by many and ill treated by none, yet it was quite other-

wise in some parts of the Round. Tideswell, in Derbyshire, rendered itself notorious by manifesting a lawless and cruel bigotry when most places were beginning to be ashamed of such spirit and conduct. In vain did the preachers endeavour to persuade the people of Tideswell that they sought the good of all. Some were brutishly ignorant, and could only discern that the vices which they deemed pleasant were rebuked by these Itinerant preachers. Others were slavishly and fiercely zealous for the forms of religion to which they and their fathers had been used, and readily acceded to the wishes of selfish and interested persons who ought to have known better, and so endeavoured to drive the Methodists from the parish. The appearance of the preacher was for some time the signal for the gathering of all the rascality and boorishness of the neighbourhood. The enraged and stupid men proceeded as far as they dared. They might certainly hoot, and mock, and curse such intruders. What Act of Parliament would condemn them for throwing mud, rotten eggs, and any other missile which, though it might leave a permanent mark on the clothes of the Methodist Preacher, would break no bone? On one occasion, while Mr. Jeremiah was conducting service, a strong man came through the crowd and seized him to pull him down; though in this he was prevented by others. On another occasion a gun was fired by some miscreants into the building in which the Methodists were worshipping. Thus the brothers Brettell and their young colleague Hayward found that the demon of persecution had not yet been completely exorcised. They were at length compelled to ask the protection of the magistrates, and were henceforth unwillingly tolerated by those who had no wish to go to gaol for their cruel zeal.

In Macclesfield itself, and in the Circuit generally there was considerable prosperity, both external and spiritual. There had been a considerable increase in the number of members in the Societies, although unfortunately there had been a decrease in many Circuits. At the Conference of 1779, the numbers in the Macclesfield Circuit were twelve hundred and thirty-six. Then the friends at length were prepared to build a new chapel. No doubt among other subjects of converse at the gathering at Mr. Ryle's house, on the occasion of Mr. Wesley's visit in March, was the contemplated erection. It was certainly high time that a suitable place of worship should be provided. The Methodists could no longer speak of themselves as being absolutely poor, however much they might be despised by some of their neighbours. George Pearson was certainly poor enough when he became a Methodist, and had manifested more tact in saving souls than in acquiring money. But George had sons who were prospering, and were willing to help their father, to whom they had been greatly indebted for education, and for a start in life which he had not himself enjoyed. He was himself now in business as a silk-throwster. The Clulows too were not poor; and, though John was not in the Society, he was quite prepared to fight, or beg, or give, or anything else for his mother's religion, except give up his worldliness. Then there were the Barbers, Thomas and John, and B. J. Lean, and others of similiar position. The young people of the Roe family might not be able to render much pecuniary aid, yet they could do something; and their presence in such a mean-looking chapel suggested the desirableness of improvement. The late Mayor, Mr. Gould, was known to be favourable to evangelical religion. Then there was no man in Macclesfield more

highly-respected than Mr. Ryle. Surely, if united and in earnest, they could build a chapel which would indicate to the thoughtless that Methodism was not the religion solely of the poorest, though it took hold of these to elevate them. The real Gospel sounded well in the beautiful church built by Mr. Roe; and it would not be marred as it fell from the lips of the Methodist preachers if uttered in a building somewhat more comfortable than the one they had hitherto occupied.

It was not thought desirable to seek a site in the centre of the town. Possibly the effort would have been entirely unavailing. Besides, such a situation might have suggested antagonism to St. Michael's. After due consideration a plot of ground was fixed upon in a locality opposite to that in which Christ-church had been erected, and not very far from the site of the old chapel, nor very distant from the place where Mr. Wesley preached in front of George Pearson's house. Methodism, having approached Macclesfield from Shrigley-fold, seemed to have taken special hold on that side the town. The borough was still very limited, the population not exceeding seven thousand. Christ-church had been at first surrounded by pasture-land in which kine grazed, and so, the plot of ground now (1779) taken possession of by the Methodists, was marked off from one of many green fields. The little children who gazed wonderingly at the workmen digging out the foundations of the chapel were, before they became old men and women, to see it in the midst of a closely-packed population. Thus did the Methodists enter on a possession which was to become sacred to many in successive generations. No doubt the brothers Brettell and their friends greatly rejoiced, and heartily magnified the Name of their God. The Lord

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prospered them in building, so that when Mr. Wesley visited Macclesfield on Tuesday, March 21, 1780, he had the opportunity of occupying the pulpit of the new chapel.

At the following Conference, all the three preachers left, and Mr. Robert Roberts was sent as Assistant. He was a native of Cheshire, and had, in former years, suffered much persecution in and near Chester, because of his connection with the Methodists. He recorded in reference to these early days:—"I met with what I expected; namely, persecution from relations, friends, and neighbours; and wherever I went, some railed and others cursed me, and said, 'it would be no more sin to kill me than to kill a mad dog.' Others pitied me, and cursed the false prophets, as they called the preachers, who had deceived me, and driven me out of my senses. Into whatever street or lane of the city I went, I met with reproach and cruel mockings." Afterwards, he adds, "the people agreed not to employ me, because I was a Methodist preacher. I was brought before the justices at one of their monthly meetings; but this did not afford my persecutors cause for triumph, for I had words given to me which confounded them all." Mr. Roberts found himself, when he came to Macclesfield, in much pleasanter circumstances than when he manifested his fidelity and zeal by preaching Christ to his neighbours around Chester, while earning his bread as a wheelwright. He had a comfortable chapel to preach in, and many kind friends, both in the town and throughout the Circuit.

Soon after Mr Roberts arrived in Macclesfield, good old Thomas Barber was called to his rest. He had long served the Lord, but had been specially solicitous

concerning the spiritual condition of his wife. That beloved one had however at length been led into the enjoyment of a clear sense of God's pardoning mercy, and had passed away exulting to the presence of her Saviour. To Thomas his work now appeared to be finished. He had witnessed the opening of the new chapel, doing in reference to it what he could. The aged saint wished to rejoin his partner in the heavenly temple. On December 18th, he was taken with malignant fever. When Miss Roe asked him, "Is the Lord precious to your soul?" he replied, "He is all love; I shall soon be with Him." On the 21st, he was very ill, but very happy. He said, "I have been tempted to fear patience will not hold out in all this pain; for I feel as if every limb was tearing asunder from my body; but I know God is all-sufficient." Afterwards he declared,—"I am going to the heavenly Canaan, that promised land for which I set out long ago." On the morning of the day preceding Christmas Day, good old Thomas Barber calmly fell asleep in Jesus.

In the meantime Mr. Charles Roe and his family were in the midst of exciting and painful circumstances. Mr. Roe's business-prosperity had been almost unexampled among his townsmen. When he came thither from Castleton in Derbyshire he was poor, and had for sometime earned but a moderate livelihood as a button and twist manufacturer. But he had since then realized an ample fortune. As already mentioned, he had erected the first silk-mill in the town, and that had been successful. He had gone into the cotton-trade, and that had prospered with him. He had established works for the smelting of copper, and his wealth had thereby also been augumented. It was generally supposed that even

the eloquence and popularity of the Rev. David Simpson proved to his patron a source of revenue. It was understood that Mr. Simpson had a hundred a year allowed, on which a man and his family might possibly exist comfortably in those days. But the pews let or sold well, and the vaults and graves were in considerable demand, and building plots around the new church were rising in the market. Mr. Roe was no doubt a rich man, yet must have been a very unhappy one. He regarded some of his children as setting him at defiance on the subject of Methodism, and apparently willing to be left without a penny rather than renounce connection with that sect; others of his children who had gone far enough from Methodism, were causing him trouble by their eager pursuit of sinful gratification, while age and infirmities were creeping on him, and suggesting that the time could not be far distant when his body must be laid in the vault he had prepared for the family in proximity to Christ-church.

His son Robert had vainly tried to satisfy the bishops and college authorities without withdrawing from the Methodists. Were he once ordained as a clergyman, he might regain his father's favour, and still aid the Wesleys in spreading Scriptural holiness through the land. But he had not succeeded. Some time previously Mr. Charles Roe had been mortified by finding that his influence, and that of his friend, Mr. Gould, the Mayor, could not secure Mr. Simpson's appointment as "prime curate" of Macclesfield. He now found that nothing which he could do was sufficient to get Robert ordained, except on terms to which the young man would not submit. So Robert Roe was still forbidden to enter his father's house, or even to approach the town, lest additional disgrace should be

incurred by the family through the people being reminded of his obstinacy, college failure, and persistent Methodism.

But Robert was not the only child who caused his father uneasiness. Joseph had also been exiled on account of Methodism, and as in his case there was no hope of his entering the Church as a clergyman, and therefore nothing to call for the father's interference, he seems to have been lost sight of, remaining at a distance, and enjoying no direct communication with his father. Charles Roe, junior, had once been a zealous Methodist, but had yielded to his father's injunctions, and to his own returning worldliness, and had long since left the Society. But he was no comfort to his father. Contrary to the wishes of his parents, he plunged into gaiety and extravagance, and at length married without his father's consent. He returned to Macclesfield hoping to appease his father's displeasure, and to be permitted to introduce his bride to the paternal home. But he was disappointed. The self-willed and imperious old man refused to hear his pleading, or to see him, and left a message with the servants that he was not to be allowed to enter his dwelling. The step-mother contrived that Charles should see his father as by accident; but the father sternly bade him leave the house.

William and Samuel, and Mr. Roe's other children, appear to have chosen earthly things as their portion. There is no evidence that any one of them was a real comfort to their father, or that they helped Mr. Simpson in his endeavours to extend true religion in the town. Most of the family who were not exiled because of their Methodism were utterly worldly in their tastes and pursuits. When to these family trials, there were

added the infirmities of age, and painful sickness, and the anticipation of death; we may perceive that the rich manufacturer, amid his possesions and honour, was made to feel that, without heart-felt religion, all must be "vanity and vexation of spirit." The far-seeing man had greatly blundered.

In the autumn of 1780, Mr. Robert Roe was among friends at Bristol. There he had the opportunity of holding converse with Mr. Wesley as well as hearing him preach. The young man needed much consolation. His earthly path seemed completely blocked up, and his health had long been failing. In October he was distressed by the intelligence that his father was regarded by the physicians as at the point of death, and that there was no possibility of his brother Samuel's recovery. So Robert set off northward, hoping that he might be allowed to see his father and be reconciled to him. As he journeyed he learned that his father was a little better, and at Chesterfield. This made it more likely that he could obtain an interview. He reached Chesterfield, and spent the night at an inn, having succeeded in inducing some who had access to his father to solicit on his behalf an interview. They pleaded that nothing but love could have brought Robert so far. The father was so agitated that Mrs. Jebb, the friend who had ventured to say that Robert was in Chesterfield, was compelled to change the subject. Mr. Roe declared he would not see such a son, and that he only came to kill him outright, or from some selfish motive. Mrs. Jebb, watching for a favourable opportunity, gently pleaded again, stating that the young man's health was so feeble that the journey must have been undertaken from love. The father replied: "Love! I do not believe it; but if I must see him, let it be now. I will give him

an hour." Robert, who was waiting, entered in great agitation. The aged father trembled: the son threw himself at his father's feet, and implored his blessing. By degrees the old man softened a little, but his views remained unchanged. He persisted in affirming that Robert had ruined himself. He then endeavoured to induce him to make overtures of marriage to a young lady of their acquaintance, who would have ten thousand pounds as her fortune. When the son suggested that the young lady gave no evidence of possessing God's grace, the father answered, "You are honest, Robert, but too nice." Robert then earnestly pleaded that he might be allowed to visit Macclesfield. As, however, he could give no promise of keeping aloof from the Methodists, the father would not consent.

When all hope of being allowed to visit his home had been destroyed, the opportunity was unexpectedly given, though in a sorrowful manner. The father, of his own accord, said, "You may go with us to Macclesfield, Robert, if you choose, on condition that, as speedily as possible, you will accompany poor Samuel to Bristol, and take care of him on the journey and while from home." To this a willing consent was given. During the short time Robert spent in Macclesfield his father endeavoured to keep him as much as possible in-doors. He was grieved when the young man visited a few of the Methodists, and even when he went to his aunt Roe's, or to see Mr. Simpson. Had the son come home as a felon direct from Chester gaol, the father could scarcely have dreaded disgrace more. On the first of November the brothers started for Bristol, Samuel evidently not likely to survive long, and Robert exceedingly feeble, but trying hard to hold out. Robert, as he had charge of the invalid, expected that in parting

his father would give him some money: but he was not entrusted with a farthing. Expenses absolutely necessary were to be defrayed without any confidence being reposed in the Methodist. Robert's chief consolation at this time was that Samuel, though hitherto careless about his soul, appeared to be truly penitent. The father joined them at Bath, as he also needed a change; but, though he knew that Samuel could not recover, and his own life was exceedingly precarious, he discoursed of balls, assemblies, and other amusements which were beginning to be held as the winter season advanced, and an account of all which was sent to him.

Samuel became feebler still, and was exceedingly desirous to return home: he wished to see some of his friends there, but especially to have the advantage of Mr. Simpson's advice and prayers. So the family assembled to receive the sacrament together, including William who had come to assist Robert. The distress of the little group was very great. The travellers then started in a conveyance which had been provided for the occasion. This was large enough to hold a bed on which Samuel was laid, and he was carried to it amid an immense concourse of people; four other persons also could be accommodated inside the carriage. Six horses were needed to draw the conveyance; and the brothers thus started northward, leaving their parents at Bath.

On Wednesday, December 27th, the party arrived at Leek, and were kindly received by friends of the family, Mr. and Mrs. Daintry. One more day and the sufferer would be able to see Mr. Simpson, and others to whom he wished to speak. To some who were neglecting their souls the dying young man had a message of tender warning: from Mr. Simpson he desired direction and comfort. For this he had travelled far in much

weakness and pain, but his wish in this respect was not to be gratified. He had lovingly listened to Robert's counsel and inquiries before they left Bath, and had expressed a penitent hope in God's mercy through Christ. He was not, however, to see his native place again. When Robert and William, the Methodist and the pleasure-seeker, met on the Thursday morning, it was to speak of their brother Samuel as having entered the world of spirits. On Friday, the huge and ponderous carriage, drawn by six horses, slowly entered Macclesfield, and proceeded towards the prosperous citizen's house. Two of his sons were in the conveyance, but of the third there was but the lifeless body. On the following Sunday the family vault at the new church was opened, and the remains of the once gay young man deposited in it. Neither his father nor mother was there; but there were many present who could recollect how eagerly he had sought earthly delight among them. Good Mr. Simpson, the cousins Hester Ann and Robert, and many a godly spectator cherished the hope that Samuel had found mercy; and prayed that the impressive illustration of the insufficiency of earthly good might be sanctified to the bereaved family and the numerous spectators.

When the funeral was over Robert determined that he would stay for a little time where he now was; he was exceedingly feeble, and here he had friends who would comfort his troubled mind. He learned, to his sorrow, that his father was displeased at his remaining in the town, but, as his parents still tarried in Bath, he saw no sufficient cause to remove. Some of his near kin treated him scornfully, but that he could endure; so, during a few months, he tried to get good and be of service among the Methodists once more.

There are a few particulars concerning the chapel opened in Sunderland Street early in 1780, that may prove interesting to some. The chapel and site appear to have been, legally, the private property of Mr. Ryle, (formerly Mayor), and to have remained his property for some time afterwards. It had been occupied several months before the trust was formed. In order that Mr. Ryle might himself become one of the trustees, the property was in the first instance conveyed by him, in a deed dated December 30th, 1780, to Martha Ryle, of Macclesfield, widow. The deed states how "John Ryle, of Macclesfield, gentleman, sold to Martha Ryle, for the sum of eight hundred pounds then paid, certain land, being part and parcel of a field or close of land called "Pickford Eyes," reaching from the street called Sunderland Street to the brook behind; and also all that new-erected building, edifice, or house for religious worship, lately erected and built upon part of the said plot: and also all that Messuage or Dwelling House and Stable likewise lately erected and built thereupon."

When, in March, 1780, Mr. Wesley preached in the new chapel it was thus at the disposal of Mrs. Ryle. The assistant, John Brettell, might possibly satisfy Mr. Wesley that there had been sufficient reasons for the delay in forming the trust. It is not likely, however, that the next Assistant, Robert Roberts, would have escaped without censure if, twelve months afterwards, Mr. Wesley had found the house of the Lord vested solely in widow Ryle, without any deed to direct or restrain her. Mrs Ryle no doubt was one in whom the Methodists had full confidence; but life is insecure, and that which is devoted to God should be conscientiously cared for. Probably Mr. Wesley's anticipated visit stirred up the Assistant and other friends to get the

trust-deed properly executed. A fortnight before Mr. Wesley reached Macclesfield the deed of transfer was signed by the worthy matron, who then duly received back the eight hundred pounds she had paid. We subjoin the names of the Trustees thus appointed.

JOHN RYLE, of Macclesfield, Gentleman;
JOHN CLULOW, of the same place, Baker;
SAMUEL ROWBOTHAM, of same place, Silk-throwster;
GEORGE PEARSON, of same place, Silk-throwster;
ROBERT JOHNSON, of same place, Silk-throwster;
JOHN BRADBURN, of same place, Silk-throwster;
ELIAS LOMAS, of Bollington, Tanner.

These Trustees were to have and to hold the estate, so that John Wesley, and at his demise Charles Wesley, and at his demise the Conference of the people called Methodists, should appoint preachers to hold Divine service therein, and to preach in accordance with "the Notes and Sermons."

George Pearson, generally regarded as the earliest Methodist in Macclesfield, and one of the chief promoters of Methodism in the town and neighbourhood, though selected as one of the trustees, was still unable to write his name. The marks which he appended are so formed as to indicate that he had never tried to use a pen. The crosses are such as an infant might have made. Yet was Mr. Pearson exercising a mighty power on behalf of God and souls at that time.

We have more reason to regret that John Clulow, baker, was disqualified for being a trustee, than that George Pearson could not sign the deed. Mr. Clulow, had evidently once been a member of the Society. In the selection made of him as Trustee, there was probably some reference to the long-tried excellence of his godly

wife. Had this John Clulow been fully devoted to God and his cause, it is not improbable that his son, of the same name as his father, might have, in early life, been led to religious decision. A memorandum appended to the Trust-deed reads thus:—"The within-named John Clulow, having never signed this trust-deed, and now not being a member of the Society called Methodists, we the remaining trustees do chuse and appoint James Lean, of Macclesfield, Druggist, trustee in the room of and place of the said John Clulow." Doubtless good Elizabeth Clulow would be painfully disappointed that her husband's place among the Trustees must be occupied by another, and she would be still more pained to observe the want of religious decision on the part both of her husband and son.

The chapel thus built was not a large one, yet we find that there was a debt on it of £234 7s. It was provided in the deed that so soon as the said debt should have been paid, the sum of £3 6s. 5d., as a ground-rent, should be paid to John Ryle, on each 25th of March. The Methodists had now taken possession of a property and sanctuary which were to become sacred to thousands.

CHAPTER XII.

FADING GLORY AND ABIDING. 1781.

WHEN, on Thursday, March 29th, 1781, Mr. Wesley paid his annual visit to Macclesfield, he was on way to take part in a memorable gathering at Manchester. London for three years had had its "cathedral" in City Road chapel, and now Manchester had provided such a structure for the manufacturing counties of the North-West. Oldham Street chapel would provide room for the special convocations of Methodist people, as well as suitable accommodation for the congregation in the town on ordinary occasions. The thoughts of many, far and near, were directed to the opening of this spacious and beautiful house of prayer. Macclesfield had therefore but little of Mr. Wesley's presence, as he must give an extra day or two to Manchester; and, no doubt, many of his followers would visit that town on occasion of the solemn and joyful event. So Thursday had to serve for Congleton, Macclesfield, and Stockport, a sermon being preached at each of the three places by Mr. Wesley, who then proceeded on his journey northwards.

On Friday, unmindful of superstitious notions, the great chapel was solemnly consecrated for the worship of Almighty God, amid the glad Hallelujahs of the

disciples, and the amazement of mortified foes who might well wonder whereunto this sect would grow. But a few years had elapsed since these Methodists, amid the jeers of the vulgar, assembled to pray in that mean upper room by the river's side. Now they numbered among them several who, except for their "schismatic" proceedings, commanded the respect of all; and they had raised in the very heart of the town one of the most spacious sanctuaries to be found in it. Where, except the old church, was its superior? Mr. Wesley naturally compared it to the beautiful chapel in City Road, for which he had been devoutly thankful to Almighty God; and he now thought the Manchester one about equal in size. He was also pleased with the apparent devoutness of the large congregation. The following Sunday he was again to conduct the services. As might be expected, the crowds from the neighbouring places were great. Most likely our Founder was correct when he recorded, concerning the administration of the Lord's Supper after the public service:—"At the Communion was such a sight as I am persuaded was never seen at Manchester before: eleven or twelve hundred communicants at once; and all of them fearing God." There is every reason to believe that the Macclesfield Circuit was represented on that memorable occasion.

Two days previous to the hasty visit of Mr. Wesley to Macclesfield, just mentioned, an interview occurred at the house of Mr. Charles Roe which was afterwards remembered with interest by those specially concerned. Miss Roe is best known to Methodists by her subsequent name of Hester Ann Rogers. On the Tuesday before Mr. Wesley's visit, Mr. Rogers and Miss Roe first met; and, as it strangely happened, in the house of the man who had so determinately opposed his children's con-

nection with Methodism. Mr. Charles Roe and Mrs. Roe were still at Bath for the purpose of recruiting enfeebled health. Mr. Robert had been sent to Macclesfield to take care of poor Samuel; in these circumstances he must be allowed to make his father's house his home; and after Samuel's interment he had been allowed to stay there during his parent's absence. The father made the sojourn as unpleasant as he possibly could by letter, but he did not forbid it. Some of Robert's near kin also endeavoured to mortify him, but they had not authority to drive him forth as a fugitive so long as the father refrained from giving the command. So, during full three months, Robert remained under the paternal roof. The young man ventured on the daring act to ask two Methodist preachers to visit Macclesfield. One of these was Mr. Samuel Bardsley, whose ministry had been much blessed to the cousins seven years before, when Mr. Bardsley was stationed in Macclesfield. The other was Mr. James Rogers, whom Robert had heard in Leeds and learned to esteem and love. It is not recorded that these Methodist preachers were entertained at the house of Mr. Charles Roe; but they met a few godly friends there, and had a blessed season in prayer. Robert's sister Margaret was on this occasion stirred up to seek God's favour. Their cousin Hester Ann on that day saw for the first time the worthy man who was eventually to be her husband; but many solemn scenes and painful trials had to be passed through before such a union was even contemplated.

We here obtain an instructive glimpse of early Methodistic life in Macclesfield. The members of the Society, preachers, and hearers, were expecting Mr. Wesley on Thursday. Messrs. Bardsley and Rogers had also come from Sheffield to see Mr. Robert: it was

uncertain how long he might be allowed to remain in Macclesfield, as his parents purposed to return thither as soon as the severity of the winter season should be over. The pious group, of whom we have trust-worthy information, had a little leisure, and it was well employed. On Tuesday night, though it was not the regular preaching-night at the new chapel, the Methodists flocked together to hear Mr. Rogers, from Sheffield, who preached from, "To you that are troubled rest with us." On Wednesday morning at five o'clock there was a congregation glad to hear once more their former pastor, Mr. Bardsley, whose loving heart found expression while expounding the text, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." It would seem that the general impression was favourable, for we learn that, eighteen months afterwards, Mr. Rogers was appointed Assistant at Macclesfield; and, a year later, was reappointed, with Mr. Bardsley as his helper. It is likely that some sort of informal invitation was given, although Mr. Wesley was at the time "the Stationing Committee." Though autocratic, he was both easy to be entreated and judicious.

During the intervals between the seasons of public and social worship, the godly friends found time to minister consolation to the afflicted. David Pickford had during the past thirty-six years experienced the love of Jesus. The power of saving grace had been manifested throughout life and its cares, and tasks, and allurements. The preachers from Sheffield were now taken to the chamber of the dying saint, to see how the grace of God could sustain a sufferer when passing through the river of death. Thus were the hours of these early Methodists spent.

Since Mr. Wesley's visit in 1780, Mr. Thomas Corbett had been appointed to the Macclesfield Circuit as the junior preacher. Of him but little has been known; and nothing, after his conversion, to his discredit. He did not enter the Itinerancy very early, yet was enabled to labour therein several years with considerable success. His latest sickness was attended by more than ordinary suffering, but the consolation abounded, even as the sorrow abounded. Eight years after he left the Macclesfield Circuit, the friends there learned that he had passed to his reward, wonderfully sustained by the Saviour he had proclaimed among them.

A few days after the gathering of Methodists for converse and prayer in the house of Mr. Charles Roe, that gentleman began his return journey from Bath. He was still very feeble, yet hoped that his residence in the South during the winter might prove to have been the means of prolonging his life somewhat: he had many purposes unaccomplished. He was spared to re-enter the home which he had built and furnished for himself; and here he found the long-banished Robert. It is evident that the young man would not in ordinary circumstances have been recalled, except on the condition of renouncing Methodism. Joseph, the other Methodist son, remained an exile. In consequence of the sickness and death of Samuel, and the father's illness and absence, Robert had gained entrance to the house; and his presence was tolerated by the father on his return. Most likely the sufferer perceived that no member of the household would bear so patiently his many caprices, his large demands of service, and his frequent outbreaks of ill-humour. Besides, it seemed likely that, by taxing to the utmost Robert's sense of filial piety, he might be prevented for a season from holding any inter-

course with the Methodists. Future arrangements could be postponed: the dwelling and all therein, and all his other stores of wealth, were still at the owner's sole disposal. Hence Robert was now constantly kept in attendance on his father; the invalid desired something to amuse him, and he must read to him almost incessantly. The health of the young man had been somewhat recruited by regular exercise and cheerful society during the past few months, but it now received another shock from which it was never to rally. But the son's feebleness and needs were unperceived by the aged and self-indulgent father.

On Sunday, April 22nd, such members of the family as could be spared went to Christ-church. Robert was allowed to go thither in the forenoon; doubtless he would have preferred going among his Methodist friends at their earlier service. That privilege was not allowed, nor was he favoured, either, to hear Mr. Simpson that day. But the Lord can bless his people by any instrumentality: Robert was very ill, and had earnestly prayed for a day of "soul-rest." At the church, under Mr. Collins, the curate who assisted Mr. Simpson, the tempted one felt a gracious deliverance from the adversary,—his faith was strengthened, and his heart was enlarged. And indeed he had need of all the grace thus obtained. During the rest of the day he was detained at home, and his father, being worse in health than usual, was more irritable than at ordinary times. All around the invalid had a trying time; but he was the chief sufferer. The father repeated the accusations which had been so often and so unreasonably uttered; but the son had been made "strong in the Lord," and was enabled patiently to endure all. He consoled himself by the reflection that his father really loved

him, though his mind was so sadly warped by incorrect views of religion, and by worldly desires.

During the week commencing with the Sabbath just mentioned, Mr. Charles Roe became daily feebler. On the Saturday Robert was greatly impressed by the change, and recorded:—"My father is worse, sometimes my heart seems ready to break with grief; at others, it feels as hard as a stone. Lord, save his soul for Christ's sake." On Sunday, "My father is still worse. What earthly thing can comfort him now? Lord, how astonishing is it that we should be tied to anything here, seeing we are all passing away as fast as time can carry us. O my dear father! My soul longs for his salvation! I have much power with God for him."

It was evident to the medical men, and indeed to all around, that the end was nigh. The sufferer was not extremely aged, and had lived a regular life, so that he might have reasonably anticipated a few more years on earth to complete some of his many plans; but such prolonged life was not to be his. Then the selfish desire was manifested, by some who had rendered an external compliance with many of their father's wishes, to obtain a larger share of his wealth than fairly belonged to them. Robert and Joseph had been banished, and it was hoped that they had both been cut off from the property. But Robert was now present, though evidently not disturbing his father about his will. Should Joseph be informed that his father was dying? Some were selfish enough to say, "No." Who could say how their father might be moved to tenderness by the sight of the other exiled one? Robert, however, resolved that, if possible, Joseph, who had never ceased tenderly to love his harsh parent, should have an opportunity of imploring his blessing.

He requested his cousin Hester Ann to arrange this; and doubtless her mother aided in the needful supply of money. An express was sent off, bearing the sorrowful tidings; but, as two hundred miles must be traversed in conveying the message, and the period of steam locomotives had not arrived, some considerable time must elapse before Joseph could reach Macclesfield.

On Wednesday, May 2nd, it was evident that the fatal crisis was at hand. Mr. Roe, and all about him, were convinced that he was dying. Mr. Simpson was unremitting in his attentions, at times pointing the dying man to the Saviour, and at other times pleading on his behalf before God. To some of the family there seemed too much anxiety manifested concerning the soul of one who had been so highly-respected, and whom they were prepared to praise on brass and marble. But Mr. Simpson was too enlightened not to have observed the deficiencies of his patron, and there were others who, because present when the restraints imposed by such a clergyman's company were withdrawn, had painful reason to know how many evidences of an unrenewed heart had been perceptible in Mr. Roe, notwithstanding a clear intellectual assent to the Gospel plan of salvation. The dying man himself was at last in earnest concerning his spiritual safety. He requested Mr. Simpson to pray with him several times during that momentous day; and though now excessively feeble, he got on his knees in bed to plead with God for mercy.

He called for all his children, one by one, by name. He was informed that Joseph had been sent for, but could not be reasonably expected to arrive for some time. To all the others he spoke kindly. Charles, who had renounced Methodism when directed to do so, but had

afterwards grievously offended him by his unsteady habits, and by marrying without his parents' consent, was received to favour at this late period; the dying father kissed him two or three times, saying, "I forgive Charles." As for Robert, Mr. Roe had really never ceased to respect him, and, in some particulars, had been proud of him. He had admired his conscientiousness and unselfishness, while he had disliked his adherence to Methodism, which, in his estimation, degraded the whole family. Robert, too, was now fully admitted to favour. All received the blessing of their father, except the absent son, and kindly words were spoken by the dying one respecting him also.

Thus the Wednesday passed away until night was far advanced, and it was deemed desirable that the sufferer should, if possible, get some little repose. It was apparent, however, that he could not survive long. He did live throughout the night; but early on Thursday morning he entered the eternal world, and stood in the presence of the Almighty Judge. He died May 3rd, 1781, aged sixty-seven. Friends and messengers from different parts of the town learned that the "great man" had passed away, and departed with solemn mien from the dwelling.

On the Wednesday evening Joseph had begun his journey towards Macclesfield. Two hundred miles must be traversed if he would receive his father's words of reconciliation from his own lips, and there was no time to be lost. He probably gathered from the messenger who had been despatched to summon him, that, though his father had not sent for him, it was thought that there were signs of relenting in his demeanour. He would also learn that among those who ought to have welcomed him with warm affection, there

were some whose greed concerning the inheritance led them to wish his arrival to prove too late. He started homeward. There was no railway, nor any public coach which would convey him in time. But he was accustomed to ride, and it is likely that arrangements had been made, by the messenger, for change of horses. So all night through, with very brief intervals, did he urge his way, riding as though his own life depended on his expedition. But as we have seen the filial haste was in vain. He had accomplished little more than half the journey when his father ceased to live on earth. Having ridden two hundred miles in twenty six hours, on Thursday night he rode as rapidly as his wearied horse could move into Macclesfield, and towards the house from which he had been expelled: it was only to learn that his father had previous to his departure left his blessing for his absent son.*

On the Tuesday night following, the mortal remains of the much-honoured and much-dreaded man were laid in the vault beside those of Samuel his son. Those who had the arrangement of the funeral thought that an unusual display of mourning was needful. Though the day-light in May is prolonged, the interment did not take place until dusk. This gave a favourable opportunity for persons of all classes to be present; and the gloom of approaching night gave effect to the torches which had been prepared for the occasion. The body was to be conveyed to Christ-church in the carriage and by the horses recently owned by the

*It is worthy of record that Mr. Joseph Roe afterwards became Recorder of Macclesfield, having successfully competed for the office with the Hon. James Abercrombie, who was subsequently Speaker of the House of Commons.

deceased, but now covered with the trappings of woe; and many carriages, from far and near, had been sent to do honour to the memory of the departed. The crowds were immense, and it was not surprising that there ensued much delay and great difficulty, and also some peril from the restiveness of the horses in the strange circumstances in which they found themselves. But no accident occurred. Mr. Simpson did his utmost to make the solemn event profitable as well as impressive to the vast multitude. Thus the distinction which the deceased had enjoyed and valued during life also marked the closing scene of his earthly sojourn. Of what advantage to the disembodied soul?

The funeral being over, the will was eagerly asked for. What were its provisions? Should it prove that Charles, as well as Joseph and Robert, had been disinherited, the wealth of others would be considerably increased. Had Robert secretly succeeded in obtaining from his father a revocation of any deed detrimental to the interests of the banished sons? Those concerned soon learned that the deceased had never made any will! In the heart of one who has much to dispose of, and who has unhappily sought his own chief good in what he must leave, there is an unwillingness to assign it, even provisionally, to others. It seems as though it would be less his own if the reversionary claims of heirs were to be thus formally recognised. Possibly less homage might be paid to the possessor of wealth, both by those favoured in the will and by those overlooked, if the contemplated disposal should come to be known. Charles Roe had made no will. In consequence of this neglect there was much unhappiness. The good Methodist aunt, from London, was however enabled to do much towards bringing about an arrangement

moderately satisfactory to the different parties concerned. Aunt Stockdale had long been regarded by all the children as a mother: she was the sister of that "own mother" whose memory the most selfish of them could not but revere, and she resembled that mother in her loving heart and general excellence. So, after a season of distressing estrangement, the young people were induced to accept the counsel of their worthy aunt; and the property accumulated by the clever, energetic, and fortunate father was shared out. So far from "founding a family" the name of Roe, as having belonged to the rich man, was not to be perpetuated by any descendant; but only by a street in the town. Thus fades away all honour except that which comes from God.

Ten weeks after her father's death Miss F. Roe had a dream which deeply affected her, and which, it was hoped, was made a blessing to her, and to some other members of the family. The young lady dreamed that she was in the room in which her father died, in company with another person, when his spirit appeared to her, and asked in a very solemn manner, "Are my family and children seeking salvation? I say, are all my family and children seeking the full assurance of salvation." The figure then disappeared, but quickly returned, as if he were intensely anxious to give them warning, lest any of them should neglect their souls and perish in their sins. He asked, "Have all my family found the full assurance of salvation? Tell them never, never, never to rest till they find it. Do you hear me? Tell them, never, never, never to rest till they have found it." There were circumstances in the dream which were so awful as to be reserved, as appertaining to the family only. But charity finds room to hope

that the Mrs. Roe whom Mr. Wesley was acquainted with, and who was certainly a disciple of Jesus, has long since had the happiness of welcoming husband and children to heaven, through God's infinite mercy in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLINGE CHAPEL. 1782.

ON July 10th, 1781, a preaching-house, or chapel, which had recently been erected on Billinge Brow was certified and registered as a place of worship to be used by "the people called Methodists," though the property of Mr. James Mellor. It did not, however, long remain private property, but was duly purchased by the contributions of the disciples, as will be explained, and then consecrated for the service of God.

The little chapel on Billinge Brow was intended as a Methodistic centre, and continued so during about twenty-six years. The site was almost as lonely as could have been selected—near the top of a lofty hill whereon few people dwelt. But in the villages and hamlets nestling in the valleys, and in lone houses on the surrounding hills, there were already many Methodists. These, during the previous thirty years or more, had been gathered out of the world, had been formed into classes meeting in dwelling-houses, had held prayer-meetings and other means of grace among themselves, had flocked to some hill-side to hear an Itinerant preacher, when such "angels" visited those parts, and had gone to Stockport, Macclesfield, or even to Manchester, that they might listen to the Word of life. To

several of these small and scattered Societies the chapel on Billinge Brow would furnish a central place of gathering, and it was regarded by them as conveniently near. These rural Methodists would still repair at times to the new chapel in Sunderland Street, which had been opened a year before that on the Brow, but they would henceforth have a home of their own, and the "Round Preachers" and the Local-preachers, from Macclesfield and elsewhere, would visit them there.

Kettleshulme was one of the places that looked, at that time, to Billinge Brow chapel as its Methodistic centre. There had been Methodists in Kettleshulme for a long time. Perhaps John Boothby, a farmer, was one of the earliest. But in 1763, we gain a more distinct glimpse of Methodism in that village; for we learn that Ellen Boothby, (probably the farmer's daughter), joined the Society when fourteen years old. Ellen was undoubtedly a devoted disciple of Christ, yet by some means was in after years induced to marry a young man named James Bennett, who became a notorious persecutor of Methodists for a time. Possibly James was under good impressions when the engagement with Ellen was made; after their marriage, however, he forbade his wife associating with the Methodists. Discovering on one occasion that she had gone to the Class-meeting, he hurried to the place, rushed into the cottage, and dragged his wife out by the hair of her head. But on the next Class-meeting night, he made no opposition to her going, probably being ashamed of his own violence. While seated alone in the cottage, James observed that the fire was low, and went into an out-house for some fuel. There he fancied he heard a noise, and a voice whispering to his soul which seemed to say, "The devil will have thee." He fled

for his life, and directing his steps to the cottage where Ellen and her friends were speaking of the things of God, asked them to pray for him. He became a champion for Christ; but died while his children were very young. He lived long enough, however, to witness the erection of Billinge Chapel, and, doubtless, often accompanied his wife Ellen thither, their little ones going with them.

At Rainow, in the immediate vicinity of Billinge, there were already several Methodists. One of these was a blacksmith named Peter Barber, who, in the estimation of the Rev. John Shaw, who as Assistant had charge of the Circuit in 1777–1778, possessed two very important qualities,—he had a lowly estimate of his own abilities, yet could well shoe a horse that was intended to be ridden. All who have been used to occupy the saddle much, know the value of the latter accomplishment, while the former quality is admired by most people whether possessed by themselves or not. Mr. Shaw said to one of the Rainow Methodists, whom he chanced to meet, "When I visit your place again, I shall tell Peter Barber that he shod my horse thoroughly well." The other replied, "You had better not do so, you will make Peter proud." Mr. Shaw, perhaps with some reference to the character of the man he was talking with, said, "I shall tell Peter Barber what I have said. If I could, I would humble the proud; but I try to raise the lowly." Honour to the Rainow blacksmith who could, and did, satisfy riders with the shoeing of their horses! There was also a John Beard at Billinge itself, who it seems was regarded as a senior, "an old disciple," in those days. John triumphed gloriously when dying; though in the early part of his last sickness he was much tempted. "I thought the

enemy would have taken me out of the bed alive," he once said, "but Jesus gives victory."

Among the Methodists of Rainow at these times Edward Hampson was prominent. He was born at a farm-house called the Blue Boar, in the parish of Rainow, in 1739. Tradition, which tells us that a Wild Boar's Clough, not many miles from Rainow, the last wild boar which had roamed at large in this neighbourhood was killed, also affirms that near to this farmstead a wild boar of remarkable colour was once slain. Edward's father rented a small farm at Lyma, but was drowned while crossing a running stream; leaving twelve small children. Edward, who succeeded his father at Lyma, had never been taught so much as to write his name. He was left his own master while he was very young, small provision having been made for him and his brothers and sisters, and he married when he was nineteen years of age; so that there was nothing to be wondered at in the fact that he had to struggle hard throughout life, and was frequently much depressed.

His path, however, would have been still rougher had he not been led to seek and find true religion. When he took possession of Lyma there was no Methodism in the neighbourhood. But he heard that a Methodist preacher was about to visit Kettleshulme. So he went out of curiosity. After the service was over he said in jest to a woman with whom he had a slight acquaintance, "I wonder whether these Methodists would come and give *me* a sermon." She went to a preacher and told him what Edward Hampson had said, upon which he agreed to go to Lyma the following Sunday. Edward was amazed, and entreated her to prevent the preacher thus annoying him. She refused to meddle any further. The preacher accordingly

arrived, and was allowed to hold the service, Mr. Hampson comforting himself with the reflection that as this was the first visit of the Methodists to his house, it should also be the last. But at the close of the service the preacher announced that there would be service next Lord's day. This was repeated again and again. The occupier of the premises was vexed, yet, though a very resolute man, he felt unable to interfere : as he was afterwards accustomed to say, the Lord "muzzled" him.

It was about the year 1767 that Mr. Hampson heard the Rev. John Pawson, at the Marsh in Rainow, and was so convinced of his guilt and danger, that, though leaning against a wall, he could scarcely prevent himself from falling to the ground. He however endeavoured to conceal his feelings ; but, after a time, joined a little class which had been formed in the house wherein he was born. Still he was without any happy assurance of the Divine favour, and long remained in great distress. One day he resolved that he would retire to his own chamber, and would plead with God for mercy until he obtained the blessing. There it pleased the Lord to reveal Himself to the mourner : the Holy Spirit applied to his heart those words spoken by the Saviour to the man sick of the palsy :—"Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee," and the declaration of St. Paul, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." From that time Edward Hampson devoted himself to the work of God. He had frequent need to seek the renewed assurance of God's mercy, but for a long time he walked in the narrow way with whole-hearted earnestness, and God blessed him, and made him a blessing. He was, first of all, employed in leading his own mother to the Saviour ; soon afterwards his daughter was induced

to yield her heart to Jesus; and, subsequently, others of his kindred. The first time he prayed in the class, which was before he had been made happy in Christ, a pious member said to another, "I looked round with anxiety to see whether any strangers were present while Edward was praying, and I was glad to see that none but our own friends were present, for I never heard such a blundering prayer in all my life." But, after he had received the "Spirit of adoption," Edward Hampson was better fitted for usefulness; and, being thoroughly in earnest, he became of great service. Especially was he the instrument of good to the sick and dying, being made wise to win souls. Edward was anxious that his neighbours should hear the truth from those whom he knew to be better able to expound it than he was. Hence the preaching which had been commenced in his house, in the somewhat singular manner just narrated, was continued there for fourteen years. So here was another who was greatly interested in the erection of the chapel on the Brow.

Methodists were also to be found in Adlington at this time. One of these, who was spared to a very old age, had already contributed to the erection of at least one Methodist chapel. The Rev. George Story had been directed to beg for City Road chapel, and the provinces responded nobly, as they did two or three generations afterwards when the same chapel, and freehold of site, had to be purchased from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. As might be expected, Mr. Story found his way to Macclesfield, and while there George Shore of Adlington gave him *a penny* towards the liquidation of the debt on the great London chapel. Mr. Story, judging that the gift represented much love and self-sacrifice on the part of the meanly-clad

man, was somewhat affected. He received the penny saying, "God bless you, my brother, for this." Though George's contribution would not be so effective as that first gift of a thousand pounds which started the scheme, nor as the donations of Mr. Ryle and others, the penny was a fragrant token of affection for the Saviour. In after years a little boy was taken to see George Shore, then patriarchal in age and holiness. That boy, subsequently, when he had served in the ministry for half a century, retained the recollection of his visit to a man who seemed to his young mind "full of God."

John Barber succeeded at a very early period in forming a class at Adlington. He had however to walk a considerable distance in order to lead it. The charge of the class was afterwards committed to William Percival. This leader became a travelling preacher, and the class was then transferred to George Lowe: who also left Adlington to enter the Itinerancy.

The conversion of John Barber, who first formed the Adlington class, was somewhat remarkable, and serves to illustrate the gracious power of God. It took place long before the Methodists visited the neighbourhood. John had formed the habit of reading the Bible: the blessed Spirit had imparted to him some relish for the Word. He found most delight in the Psalms, and therefore read them more frequently than other portions of Holy Scripture. One night, after the family had retired to rest, John sat down to read for a short time in his favourite part of the Book. He opened on Psalm cxvi., and read; "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. . . What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord." He then shut

the Bible, yet soon opened it again. This time his eye fell on Psalm ciii.: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy Name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." Again he closed the Bible, and again he opened it, and read Psalm cxlviii., where the psalmist calls on all animated nature, and even "fruitful trees and all cedars," to unite in thanksgivings to Jehovah. John had often observed that the psalmist seemed to have lived in the constant enjoyment of a sacred happiness, but he had not previously discerned the source of this joy. He now, for the first time, marked that the gladness arose from a consciousness of pardon, the love of God being shed abroad in his heart. Shutting the Bible, and, hastily rising from his chair, he said to himself, "Well, I never thought that my heart was really right with God, but now I find that I have no religion at all. I have no religion at all!" He knelt down to plead with God, saying, "By the help of the Lord I am determined to have David's religion." He continued upon his knees until midnight. At times his efforts seemed useless, and he was ready to give up the struggle. But he encouraged himself by thinking of God's promises and truthfulness. So he pleaded on. Soon after midnight he was enabled to rely on God's mercy through the blood of Jesus: the Comforter entered his heart, and assured him of his acceptance in the Beloved.

The transports of John Barber's joy were now unbounded. He was scarcely conscious of what he did, and, at the time, quite incapable of restraining himself. He at once aroused his wife and children; and, as may be supposed, they were alarmed, and ready to fear that he had gone out of his mind. Heretofore his

deportment had been staid, but now in the middle of the night their slumbers were disturbed in a manner the most abrupt: he was moving round the room rapidly, clapping his hands, swinging his arms in the air, and shouting loudly: "I have got David's religion! Glory be to God! I have got David's religion! Help me to praise the Lord! His mercy endureth for ever! I have got David's religion!" Many years of holy living, earnest service, and much joy in God, attested the reality of the change.

At Pott-Shrigley also there were those who would look forward with pleasure to the dedication of the little sanctuary on the hill. There are few places more beautifully situated than this little village, reposing in a quiet valley, surrounded by hills of picturesque form on every side, with varied and attractive scenery in its immediate neighbourhood. It is lonely, yet charming in its loneliness. There is a legend concerning the erection of its church which must have been suggested by the smallness of the place, and the completeness of its exclusion from the world. It is affirmed that the builders of Shrigley church erected it elsewhere amid a considerable population which they hoped would be benefited thereby. Satan, however, alarmed at this invasion of territory which he had hitherto regarded as his own, resolved to frustrate the purpose of the founders. Watching for a suitable opportunity, he took up the church, and all appertaining thereunto, and departed. It so happened, however, that he was encountered in mid-air by the patron Saint. Not daring to proceed further with his ill-gotten spoil, yet resolved not to restore it to its proper place, the devil threw it into "a hole," where it was not likely to do either much good or harm. In that sequestered valley, thus irreverently

designated, the old church certainly existed before the period of credible local tradition. In the retired hamlet Methodism early obtained a footing.

In 1772, several years before the erection of the Billinge chapel, a young woman named Sarah Smith went to hear the Methodists. Her chief opportunity for doing so was in Macclesfield, which had lately been made a Circuit-town. Sarah had, while a girl, worshipped in the ancient church to which reference has been made, and had been there impressed with the importance of eternal things. But association with thoughtless companions, and the evils of her own heart, had caused her to neglect her soul. When about twenty years of age she was led to hear a Methodist preacher, and then resolved to seek the salvation set forth in the Gospel. She had, however, none to whom she could fully open her mind, and hence wandered for a considerable time in perplexity. But the Lord looked on her with compassion: he taught her Himself. In the Spring of 1773, she was alone, engaged in her work, yet intently desiring the assurance of God's mercy. Her distress increased as she thought of her frequent transgressions against a law which she knew to be "holy, and just, and good," and as she reflected that there was still within her the disposition to transgress that law. In an agony of mind she exclaimed:—"As I am, I cannot live." She cried to the Lord with all her heart for mercy through the Sacrifice of Jesus. Then was the Lord pleased to reveal Himself to her as an Almighty Saviour: Christ became graciously present to the broken-hearted penitent, whispering peace to her soul, with the assuring words: "Thou art mine, and I am thine." Thus in Shrigley was raised up a witness of the Saviour's power to forgive sins and to renew the

heart. There were others also: the names of Troutbeck, Swindells, Ellen Allen, and others were enrolled at an early period of Methodist history among the disciples of Christ at Shrigley.

The youngest son of Ellen Allen was named Joseph. He was a hand-loom weaver, and as such could earn but small wages. Seeing no way of improving his circumstances at Shrigley, he resolved to leave the village. He trudged as far as Sheffield, but could find no suitable employment. He left that town in great perplexity. As he walked along in weariness, he passed a little village chapel belonging to the Methodists. He thought of his mother, and, the door being open, he entered. He rested himself, and went into the pulpit so that no passer-by might see him. There he knelt on the pulpit-floor, and asked the Lord to care for him. He promised God that if He would provide for him, he would serve Him with all his heart, and would give one-half his income to Him. Then he felt relieved, and also experienced a strong impression that he had better return to Sheffield. He did so, and speedily got employment. He eventually became a builder, and commenced business in Stockport. There he greatly prospered. He had many poor relations to help, and cheerfully attended to their claims. But he never forgot his vow to the Lord. Half his income was devoted to sacred purposes, and, on one occasion, this son of Ellen Allen gave a thousand pounds to Tiviot-dale chapel. In 1781, however, the few Methodists at Shrigley were not rich, and could only rejoice that a little chapel was likely to be built within two miles or so of their homes.

In the hamlet of Bollington there were also a few who were interested in this project of chapel-building on the Brow. The inhabitants of Bollington were less

favoured than those of Shrigley. They had no place of worship among them: neither church nor meeting-house had ever been erected there. Those who were disposed to join in public worship chiefly went to their parish church, at Prestbury, about two miles distant. A few, with special predilections, sought to gratify these at Macclesfield or elsewhere. The ale-house was however the easiest place of resort for the men, and the women and children could idle away the Sabbath in their cottages or the fields, as the state of the weather and their inclinations suggested. There were nevertheless Methodists at this time in Bollington. One of these, Elias Lomas, tanner, had the honour of being one of the first trustees, as we have already recorded, of the original chapel in Sunderland Street. While as yet that on Billinge was only thought of, Elias Lomas signed his name to the deeds of the Macclesfield chapel, accepting a responsibility which was not light. There was also Peter Lomas, some of whose descendants still adorn Methodism in the village. Edward Clayton, farmer and tailor, was already justly esteemed. But of Bollington more will be said in a subsequent chapter. Having just glanced at the condition of things around Billinge, let us mark how the chapel was raised.

The name most closely connected with the building, was that of Mr. James Mellor, born at Billinge Head in 1753, who in after years became the proprietor and occupant of Hough Hall, near Rainow. James Mellor was an intimate friend of Edward Hampson, and in some respects they resembled each other. They were both men of sterling integrity and strong religious convictions, and both possessed abundance of self-will. They had both dared to attach themselves to Methodism while it was still a "sect everywhere spoken against."

But Mr. Mellor had a worldly prudence and energy to which his friend was altogether a stranger. While Hampson was, all his life, struggling with financial embarrassment, and sinking deeper amid his difficulties, Mellor was every year becoming richer. He had begun to serve God when about sixteen years of age. He originally possessed little, but was ready to avail himself of every opportunity of improving his circumstances, and rarely failed. He for a time contrived to save money on a small dairy-farm, not far from that on which his friend found it impossible to pay his way. Then he took up the calling of a joiner, devoting his skill especially to the construction of coffins. By the mortality not unknown even amongst the lonely hills and sheltered valleys where he dwelt, James Mellor gained money. Having thus secured the needful capital, he entered on the business of a builder, with larger demands on his skill and calculation, but with augmented profits. Observing that the time had come when coals were needed as they had never previously been in those parts, he suddenly surprised his acquaintances by appearing in the character of a coal-merchant, and once more with success.

In business enterprise he resembled Charles Roe of Macclesfield, and also in prosperity, making allowance for the positions they respectively occupied. He was at length disposed to emulate that gentleman by building, though on a much humbler scale than Christchurch, a house of prayer which should be his private property, while therein should be preached the glorious Gospel. The Rev. Robert Roberts, who was then on the Circuit, encouraged the project, not seeing any other way in which a chapel could be raised in that vicinity.

The first site fixed on was at Oaken-bank, much nearer Bollington than Rainow, and also very convenient for Shrigley. An agreement was made for the land, and the affair seemed likely to go forward. Persons, however, who were opposed to the Methodists, interposed. The vendor was intimidated, and wished to be freed from his engagement. James Mellor was not a man who would easily yield up his own will when he thought himself in the right, yet in this case was induced so to do. During the difficulties connected with this matter, good Mr. Roberts gave Mr. Mellor a piece of advice, couched in homely language, yet regarded by the hearer as of such importance, and so impressed on the memory and heart of that hearer's son, that, about ninety years afterwards, the six words in which it was conveyed were engraven on a sun-dial in the garden of Hough Hall, one word on each of the six sides of its stone pedestal. The counsel thus valued was, "Jemmy, Jemmy, mind your own peace." Well would it have been for Mr. Mellor if he had always acted in accordance therewith. When it was first given the advice was influential. No steps were taken to test the legal claim to purchase the site at Oaken-bank.

Soon afterwards a site at Billinge was offered for a very moderate price, the owner saying, "Buy this, and you shall see that nobody can frighten me from concluding the bargain." When Mr. Mellor consulted the Assistant and the friends interested in the affair, they were agreed that, although they would never have thought of building a chapel on such a lofty and lonely spot, yet, now that the offer had been made to them, the situation appeared most desirable. Not in the immediate vicinity of any village, it was within reasonable distance, according to the walking-powers then possessed by

Methodists, of several, besides being very near to Lyma, whither during fourteen years the feet of many of them had been directed at the hour of worship.

The land on Billinge Brow was accordingly purchased by Mr. Mellor; who proceeded in the task he had imposed on himself with his usual energy, tact, and success. Indeed he was himself surprised at the favourable turn which everything referring to the chapel now took. It was built as though intended to endure for ages, and possibly may so endure, though not used as a chapel. There was a gallery round three sides of the building, and the pews were substantial. A cottage was appended, and a stable for the preacher's horse, or the horse of any worshipper coming from a distance. All this might have been supposed to need a large outlay of money. But stone could be had for a mere nominal price, and other materials were purchased cheaply; wages were low, and probably many Methodists gave a helping hand gratuitously. Besides, James Mellor was there as unpaid "clerk of the works." A Divine blessing seemed to rest on the whole affair. So, including the price of the land, the cost of this first Methodist chapel in those parts, with house and stable, was one hundred and fifty pounds.

Thus far, though on a smaller scale, there had been a repetition in some sense of Christ-church: it is to be feared that some small portion of selfishness had mingled with James Mellor's zeal. Doubtless he intended the Gospel he loved to be preached there for ever. Yet, whatever happened, he would be "master of the situation" at Billinge. The Assistant from Macclesfield must be lowly-minded, though representing Mr. Wesley, when he came hither. We have no reason to think that Mr. Mellor, even in his own secret thoughts, had

pushed this matter beyond the general desire of exercising a comfortable authority.

The simplicity of his motives was about to be tested in a manner which he did not expect. At the Conference of 1782, a year after Billinge chapel had been certified for worship as the property of James Mellor, his friend and adviser, Robert Roberts, left the Circuit, and was succeeded by James Rogers. The new Assistant had several difficult tasks assigned to him, and might well have been pitied. He must try to do right, and yet please everybody in the division of the Circuit. He had also to deal with the case of the new chapel at Billinge. The subject of chapel-trusts had been carefully considered at the preceding Conference. It had been seen to be exceedingly undesirable, in any case, for the preachers and people to spend their toil in such a way that all should be at the disposal of one man, his heirs and assigns, however good the individual might be. The sooner the difficulty was faced the better. So all such cases had been, as far as possible considered, and the Assistants directed how to proceed. The new chapel in Macclesfield had been duly settled on trustees who were responsible for the proper employment and transmission of the estate. But that at Billinge was as yet private property, and might, by James Mellor's death, pass into other hands any day.

The Assistant had therefore the task assigned to him of conversing with Mr. Mellor, and explaining to him the reasons for the Conference interposing in this and similar cases. Mr. Rogers was authorized to present this alternative to Mr. Mellor:—The Methodists of the Macclesfield Circuit would purchase the chapel from him, paying to him all that it had cost him in any way, and would then have it settled on trustees, so that his

object in building the chapel should be fully and for ever carried out; or, arrangements might be legally executed by which he should have control over the chapel during his entire life, but so that it should then devolve to Methodist trustees without any purchase price. If neither part of this alternative was accepted there was a contingency which was to be rather hinted at, than at once declared. Still it must not be concealed if Mr. Mellor hesitated. Indeed it had to be fully and firmly declared before the affair was completed, that the Methodists would withdraw entirely from the chapel if the directions of the Conference were not carried out, and would erect one to be duly settled as that at Macclesfield had already been. Methodism, in no locality, must be at the mercy of one man, whether Mr. Mellor or the Assistant for the time being. For some time Mr. Mellor endeavoured to avert the loss of power which doubtless he meant to use well. But Mr. Rogers and the Methodists were firm, and at length Mr. Mellor chose to sell the chapel, being fully refunded. He then declined to enter it, or have anything further to do with it. Henceforth, for a considerable time, he went to Christ-church, Macclesfield, where Mr. Roe had accomplished on a large scale what he had attempted on a smaller one. The wealthy man had, however, passed to his final account two months before Billinge chapel was certified for worship.

Mr. Mellor thus ceased to exercise any great influence for good around his home, though he was afterwards, for a season, restored to Methodism and active service. His friend Edward Hampson, through manifold cares, had once for a long time lost his peace and power. James Mellor, then busy in making money as a carpenter, had addressed to him quaint advice,

which he thought did good, and the recollection of which might have done himself good at this time. "Ned," said Mr. Mellor, on meeting his friend one day during this period of religious depression and inactivity, "Ned, when a man is dead, they make him a coffin. I make many. Thou art as good as dead. I'd better take thy measure now, and get one ready for thee." Success and failure have their respective dangers. Want of prudence and tact at Lyma is admonitory, and so is the conduct of the successful man who built Billinge chapel. In the character of the latter, there must have been much that was truly excellent. Long after his decease, one who had large opportunity for knowing all concerning his deportment said, "He was the best father in this part of the country. A man may acquire a heap of money, and leave it to his children, and yet be a worthless father. He was the best father in this neighbourhood." In his way, he spent fifty-nine years of his life in endeavouring to serve God and do good; and died in December 1828, aged 75.

His wife, Mary, was a truly Christian woman, and they endeavoured to train their children to walk in the ways of God. When their daughter Ann was herself fifty years of age, she had not forgotten how her mother had enforced, among other lessons, "My children, never tell a falsehood, not even to save life." Their son James, when a babe, was taken to Hough Hall, which his father had then recently purchased. This was about 1796. Seventy-seven years afterwards that son was residing there, and endeavouring to live according to God's Word. Others of the family had been the means of doing some good. Yet it was generally believed that more benefit would have been conferred on his family, and on the neighbourhood, by the builder of

Billinge chapel, had he more diligently sought grace to subdue his self-will. Doubtless he did what he believed to be right, but a lowlier spirit might have judged differently and more correctly. His charactistic energy, which sometimes seemed to his early friends worse than wasted, would then have effected much good. His former pastor gave him counsel which deserved to be engraven on the heart and exemplified in life, as well as chiselled on stone, "Jemmy, Jemmy, mind your own peace."

CHAPTER XIV.

SUNSHINE AMID GLOOM. 1782—1784.

IN the spring of 1782, Mr. Wesley arranged for a somewhat more lengthened stay at Macclesfield. There was now no hindrance to his preaching for his friend Mr. Simpson at Christ-church. Since the day when he was allowed to do so, in 1777, the painful disputes in the family of Mr. Roe had most likely prevented his being asked to occupy the pulpit there. But the latest and best views of him whose remains now lay near the entrance to the church were favourable to godliness, whether highly esteemed by men or otherwise. On Good Friday Mr. Wesley preached in the church, morning and afternoon, and assisted Mr. Simpson in the administration of the Lord's Supper. That sacramental occasion must have presented a most impressive spectacle. In addition to the devout of Mr. Simpson's flock, there were, doubtless, the Methodists from miles round. Of late the worshippers at Christ-church and the Methodists had been drawn nearer together. Indeed the terms of alliance were such that even now they might not be altogether unacceptable to a generation of Methodists whose parents and grandparents were nurtured among the earlier ordinances of Methodism. The members of the Society were encouraged to attend

the services of the Established Church, as in the ministrations of Mr. Simpson they had evangelical truth declared with the unction of the Holy Ghost. But the manifestation of brotherly love was mutual. Mr. Simpson, and his assistant clergyman, with the most devout persons of their charge, were accustomed to attend the preaching at the Methodist chapel as opportunity served, especially on the Sunday evening. The noble-minded minister at Christ's church sought loving union, not selfish absorption. About thirteen hundred God-fearing persons received on that Good Friday in Christchurch the emblems of Christ's sacrificial death.

Mr. Wesley was much impressed by one effort of the organist. He thus records his feeling:—"While we were administering, I heard a low, soft, solemn sound, just like that of an Æolian harp. It continued five or six minutes, and so affected many that they could not refrain from tears. It then gradually died away. Strange that no other organist (that I know,) should think of this."* Though Mr. Wesley does not mention the circumstance, it is likely that when he spoke with Mr. Simpson of his solemn delight in the music, he would be informed by his friend that the organ had once belonged to Handel, and had often been used by that wondrous musical genius.

In the home of that organist, Mr. Æneas Maclardie, there had been born, three months before this visit of Mr. Wesley to Macclesfield, a girl who in after years was to be much beloved and admired by many of the leading families in Methodism. Whatever the gladness of those chiefly concerned in the advent of "the little

* We quote Mr. Wesley, but cannot approve his judgment in this case. The common practice of what—by its novelty, perhaps, in part,—pleased him for the moment, would be intolerable.

stranger," it is not likely that Mr. Wesley saw her. With all his foresight, he could not, had she been brought for his blessing, have guessed that she was to be the life-companion and comforter of the man who, after his death, should sway more influence than any other in the moulding of the Methodist Connexion. Yet so it was. Little Sarah was to be thus honoured. Before the dear child was twelve months old her mother was removed by death; but the babe was cared for. She would derive her earliest religious impressions from her home, Christ-church, and the Methodist chapel. It would be interesting to know how her father relished the hearty singing at the chapel: most likely his high-toned and severely-correct musical taste must have sometimes been outraged. But he was seeking for himself and children something higher than mere gratification. So, after touching with a master-hand the keys once pressed by Handel's fingers, and by his skill helping the congregation at Christ-church to hymn God's praises, he could join with pleasure in the service of song in the evening with the Methodists in their chapel. Any spiritual worshipper might have done so; for, whoever "set the tune," the hymns, thanks to God's great gift of song to Charles Wesley, were unsurpassed in the whole Christian world. Twenty-two years after this visit of Mr. Wesley to Macclesfield, she who was at the earlier period little baby Sarah Maclardie, became the wife of Jabez Bunting.

At the Conference of 1782, an additional preacher was appointed to Macclesfield, making four now in the Circuit. These, however, were directed to make suitable arrangements for the division of the Circuit at the following Conference: Burslem was to be the head of the new Circuit. Mr. James Rogers was Assistant.

Not long before this, Mr. Rogers had been very ill, and was expected to die. While travelling at Sheffield unexpected honour came to him, and trouble speedily followed. Mr. Bradford, who had been for some time travelling-companion to Mr. Wesley, was compelled to desist, and Mr. Rogers, doubtless to his great delight, was requested to accompany Mr. Wesley. It so happened, however, that the weather was intensely hot, and Mr. Wesley, who had become inured to the work, pressed along so vigorously that in six weeks Mr. Rogers was ill, from a bilious fever which threatened to terminate his life. He had, however, been restored to health, and was once more honoured by a difficult task being assigned to him, in the performance of which he would encounter much that was not pleasant.

One of the earliest trials however which awaited Mr. Rogers on his removal to Macclesfield was the illness of his dear friend Robert Roe. Up to the time at which he was appointed to the Circuit, his friend was about as usual: there appeared reason to hope that his life would be spared, and that he would now prove a great help to the cause of God. Soon after his father's death, Robert had resolved to make Macclesfield his home. Possibly the obstacles to his ordination as a clergyman might have been overcome in time; but the path to immediate usefulness had been opened in his native town. One of the leaders had requested him occasionally to lead his class, and as the good man, George Braddock, was a simple pious disciple, Mr. Robert acquiesced, and was gratified to find that his efforts were acceptable. He was also requested by the Assistant, Mr. Roberts, to preach, and did so with considerable success. Sinners were on several occasions pricked to the heart, led to cry for mercy, and found

the Saviour. So Robert Roe was satisfied that the Lord had guided him to the place where he was to live and labour.

The young man had no worldly ambition, and had, at length, been placed in circumstances in which he needed no pecuniary help. At first he had found some difficulty in finding a suitable home. Some lodgings which he took proved inconvenient, and putrid fever broke out in others, so that he went for a season to the house of his aunt Roe. When, however, his father's affairs had been settled, he found himself in a position to provide a house for himself. He selected a site which was at that time eminently suitable for an invalid, being elevated and open, and not far from the new church. There a commodious dwelling was erected for him, whilst he zealously gave himself to the great work of saving souls and building-up believers. To the new house he removed on August 9th.

By the advice of "good aunt Stockdale," Mrs. Roe, (the clergyman's widow), was to be Robert's housekeeper, taking her daughter with her. The house was at once fully consecrated for God. Indeed it seemed only an extension of the Methodist chapel. That was at some little distance, and therefore inconvenient in the case of the aged and ailing; but prayer-meetings, class-meetings, and "bands" were instituted in Mr. Robert's dwelling in Chester-gate. No doubt his friend Mr. Rogers would know all about this, and regard the addition of such a home as a blessed addition to the spiritual appliances at Macclesfield. But God's ways are not always discernible by us: "Clouds and darkness are round about Him."

Nine days after Mr. Robert Roe had entered on the occupation of his house, and when he had barely had time to witness the establishment of those means of

grace of which he hoped it would long be the centre, he took a severe cold. His constitution had been grievously undermined by the trials, of body and mind, through which he had passed. He needed great care in order to prolong his life, and, now that he had the opportunity of preaching, visiting the sick, and counselling believers, without any check, his ardent soul knew not how to restrain its zeal. The energy which his late father had manifested in worldly affairs Robert displayed where no selfish end could be gained, and, unhappily, his strength was not equal to the effort. About the time that Mr. Rogers arrived in Macclesfield, expecting to find Robert hasting from place to place as a flame of fire, he retired to his chamber never again to appear in public.

During the commencement of his brief illness the sufferer passed through some painful seasons of self-scrutiny and temptation. His views of holiness had become broad and clear, and the question urged itself on his mind, "Am I fully possessed of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord?" He who, of late, had been honoured of God to lead several into the enjoyment of perfect love, as well as to bring many sinners to Christ, now earnestly asked the godly around him to pray on his behalf. His bodily weakness was extreme, and his pains severe, and the cruel adversary of God and man took advantage of this to greatly harass him. During a fortnight there was an alternation of distress and comfort, but not one murmuring word: and at the end of that time the deliverance from his spiritual adversary was complete. The sweet sayings of Holy Writ which were specially blessed to his soul were: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

The close of his life was eminently peaceful. He settled all his temporal concerns without one regret concerning the property he was about to leave, or the home he had so recently entered into: he had a better inheritance, and exultingly anticipated reaching it. He said, at intervals, "Now I know by experience that what I have preached to others is no cunningly-devised fable. I feel now the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin." . . "What a peace do I now enjoy! When I am at the worst, (and none but God knows what I suffer), my mind is peaceful and happy, and I have not a murmuring or repining thought." Having spoken at length of his trials, persecutions, and temptations, he added, "Now I reap the blessed fruit; and I can say, neither my father's tears nor severity, neither hope of preferment nor fear of suffering, ever made me prevaricate or depart from what I believed my duty to God. And now I prove Him faithful. He hath said, 'Whosoever forsaketh father, or mother, or brothers, or sisters, or houses or land for My sake and the Gospel's, shall receive a hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come everlasting life.' This is literally fulfilled in me. I forsook all; and I was restored to my father's favour. I have a house, land, and other good things in this life; and I am going to everlasting life; whereas if I had basely complied with my friends' desires, I should have possessed no more in this life than I do; and should have been lying here with a guilty conscience, a frowning God, and full of horror in the view of a miserable eternity. O, how good it is to give up all for God! Now I feel it; and I shall praise Him for ever. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." When the Sabbath (September 13th, 1782), was about to dawn, the sanctified spirit of this patient sufferer left those

who were kneeling around his bed, weeping and praying, and entered the heavenly temple. *They* spent the day in darkened rooms, but *he* in the light of the New Jerusalem,—cloudless and eternal. That day fortnight Mr. Simpson preached a funeral sermon at the new church from the words :—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and in the evening of the same day Mr. Rogers preached another in the Methodist chapel, from, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

Another occasion of trouble, alike to the clergyman at Christ-church and the Methodist Assistant, was the misguided zeal of some extreme Calvinists. A few years earlier, some preachers, chiefly young men, under the direction of Lady Huntingdon, had visited Macclesfield. They were at first invited to do so, and subsequently encouraged, by some who had been attached to J. Bennet and D. Taylor. When the weather would not allow of the services being held in the open air, the preachers occupied a barn. One of the most zealous partisans resident in Macclesfield afterwards declared that David Simpson at that time frustrated their designs by guile. He used to invite to his house the preachers sent under the sanction of Lady Huntingdon, and they, of course, worshipped in Christ-church when not themselves preaching. He used to treat them very cordially, and talked with them fully on the grand truths concerning redeeming love on which they were agreed. Then he would commend their zeal for the salvation of sinners, but would suggest that there were many places where their efforts were more needed. "You acknowledge that I preach the Gospel so that men may be

saved, but there are many villages, and even towns, where it is not proclaimed by any one. Would you not glorify the Saviour more by making Him known there?" To this the visitants were compelled to assent. "So," added the zealous Calvinist, "we could make little headway until Captain Scott came among us." The Rev. John Scott, formerly a sea-captain, was not a man to be turned aside by any loving stratagem of Mr. Simpson. He regarded all preachers of universal redemption as opponents of the truth, and he especially sought to win over their adherents. Methodism in Congleton suffered much in this way, and that town then formed part of the Macclesfield Circuit. Mr. Wesley recorded, the day before the memorable Good Friday of 1782 spent by him at Macclesfield, "Coming to Congleton, I found the Calvinists were just breaking in, and striving to make havoc of the flock. Is this brotherly love? Is this doing as we would be done to? No more than robbing on the highway. But if it is decreed, they cannot help it: so we cannot blame them." In Macclesfield, all who had proclaimed God's universal love in Christ to sinners, and the need of human fidelity to ensure personal salvation, had now to endure much hardness, and needed ceaseless vigilance to prevent the flock being scattered.

Mr. Rogers found much comfort in his colleagues. One of these, Christopher Peacock, a Yorkshireman, a young man, spent but one year in the Macclesfield Circuit, and died in Ireland before he had concluded the fifth year of his itinerancy. When seized with fatal illness, far from his kindred, he declared, "My soul is preserved in peace, and stayed upon God. I have no anxiety respecting life or death; no fear of any kind." Being asked, "Do you feel Christ precious?" he

answered, "Yes." "Are you as happy as when you were in health?" He replied, "*I am happier.*"

When in May, 1783, Mr. Wesley visited Macclesfield he found the Society in a very pleasing state. Though the ultra-Calvinists under Captain Scott had done much harm at Congleton and other parts of the Circuit, yet in Macclesfield itself the mischief had not been extensive. But few members had been lost to the Society, and their departure had been far more than made up by the conversions which had taken place. Mr. Wesley had come from Manchester, where he had been filled with grateful wonder at the mighty power of God. Such a sight he believed had never before been witnessed in that town. He records: "It was supposed there were thirteen or fourteen hundred communicants, among whom there was such a spirit as I have seldom found; and their whole behaviour was such as adorned the Gospel." Yet, in his estimation, the Society at Macclesfield was not unworthy of comparison with that at Manchester. On Tuesday afternoon he preached in the new church, and then proceeded to examine the state of the work of God among the members. He wrote:—"This Society seems as lively as even that at Manchester, and increases nearly as fast. Not a week passes wherein some are not justified, and some renewed in love. Wednesday, 21st May:—I met a few of these, and found them indeed,—'All praise, all meekness and all love.' In the evening I exhorted them all to expect pardon or holiness to-day, not to-morrow. O let their love never grow cold!"

On the 29th of September, in the same year, Mr. Wesley paid a second visit to the Circuit in less pleasing circumstances. There had been many complaints against Mr. Rogers, the Assistant. Mr. Rogers

had been directed to make arrangements for the division of the Circuit. In doing this he had found it impossible to please everyone and do what was right. A preacher's house had to be furnished by subscription, stewards had to be appointed and others changed, the limits of the two Circuits had to be fixed, and other matters settled, requiring much Christian prudence and forbearance. At Congleton especially, great dissatisfaction was expressed, and appeals were made to Mr. Wesley. Deeming it needful to visit the Circuit, he proceeded to Congleton, preaching however at Stafford for the first time on his way, where he found the work of God to be as yet as the mustard seed. On the following day, (Saturday,) he heard all the parties concerned face to face, encouraging them all to speak their whole mind. It is very probable that before they had finished they began to be ashamed of themselves. To excite each other to anger, and disloyalty, and calumny, when by themselves, was altogether different from justifying their conduct with the clear, searching, though loving glance of Mr. Wesley fixed on them. Whatever the disturbers of the peace thought of their conduct, our Founder did not admire it. He records, "I was surprised: so much prejudice, anger, and bitterness on so slight occasions, I never saw. However, after they had had it out, they were much softened, if not quite reconciled." It does not seem that the head-quarters of the Circuit partook largely of the disturbance. On the day after the pacification-meeting at Congleton, Mr. Wesley preached at Christ-church, morning and afternoon, and assisted in administering the Lord's Supper to seven hundred communicants.

Mr. Rogers had found his appointment to Macclesfield one of much sorrow. His friend Robert Roe had

died soon after his arrival. On the New Year's day following, Mrs. Rogers, to whom he was tenderly attached, had sickened, and did not recover. At the close of February she and their youngest child, a little boy eight months old, were laid in one grave. The difficulties in the management of Circuit affairs just referred to were gathering, so that the bright anticipations concerning this appointment were far from being fully realized. Yet the good man was cheered by seeing the work of the Lord prospering in the Circuit generally. The Lord had wondrously sustained his dying wife, taken away in early womanhood. Mr. Joseph Roe was, for a season, remaining in the town, and, being a devoted and zealous Methodist, was, in part, supplying the place of Robert. So Mr. Rogers was enabled to hold on his way looking heavenward.

At the Conference of 1783 the division of the Circuit took effect: Burslem was placed under the Superintendency of William Myles, who had been on the Circuit one year. Mr. Rogers remained at Macclesfield with only one colleague, an old friend of the Society there, Mr. Samuel Bardsley.

In the following spring, when Mr. Wesley paid his annual visit, he found Burslem rejoicing in its strength: he regarded the Society there as the largest and most earnest in that neighbourhood. The crowd to hear him was far too great for the chapel, which would only hold the members at the lovefeast,—a glorious occasion. At Congleton he thought the wounds made by prejudice were nearly healed, yet there was less of Divine life than in former years. A faintness and deadness remained. He also discovered that at Macclesfield more harm had been done than he had perceived on his former visits. But those who were alive to God

had been able, and still were so, to maintain and extend the work of the Lord. He thankfully recorded:—At Macclesfield "there are so many truly alive to God, that His work goes on still; only not in so rapid a manner as it might otherwise have done." "Sunday, April 4th. I preached at the new church, morning and evening, to a London congregation."

At the Conference of 1784, Mr. Rogers was appointed to labour in Dublin. Before he left for Ireland he was united in marriage to Miss Roe, who was afterwards to be so well and favourably known among Methodists as "Hester Ann Rogers." Dublin first, and afterwards London and other Circuits, were greatly benefited by her residence therein, and by her zealous efforts. God signally honoured her to the close of her life; but her removal was felt to be a great loss to the Methodists with whom she had been early associated.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. WESLEY'S LATEST VISITS. 1784—1790.

JOSEPH BRADFORD was sent to Macclesfield as Assistant at the Conference of 1784. It is probable that he was selected by Mr. Wesley as eminently suitable for a task of great importance and of considerable difficulty. One of the most prosperous Circuits in the Connexion had already suffered loss, and was likely to be still further injured, by a spirit of contention. Of few men Mr. Wesley knew more than he did of Joseph Bradford, who had been his companion in journeys in previous years; as he was also afterwards. For the present he was engaged in Circuit work, as being somewhat less exhausting than the task of attending on our Founder. He was regarded as eminently fitted to take charge of Macclesfield in its difficulty. His brethren afterwards manifested their confidence in him by electing him President in the year 1795, and again in 1803. He remained in charge of the Circuit two years, and afterwards, in 1804 and 1805, occupied a similar position for other two years.

Mr. Wesley's first record concerning Joseph Bradford has reference to a remarkable recovery from illness which he experienced. It seems that while in Ireland, in 1775, Mr. Wesley felt somewhat unwell. In the after-

noon of a very hot day, he lay down on the grass, and fell asleep. He was surprised to find himself worse rather than better, and was soon very ill. He drank a draught of treacle and water, and employed other remedies, such as are suggested in his "Primitive Physic," but in vain. He then applied to a physician, but without any good results. Eventually he became unconscious, yet said aloud, "It will be determined before this time to-morrow." His tongue was much swollen, and as black as a coal, and no pulsation in heart or wrist was discernible; yet he was convulsed all over. During the night, Mr. Wesley was again conscious, when Joseph Bradford, his loving attendant, approached him with a draught in a cup, saying, "Sir, you must take this." The sufferer thought, "I will, if I can swallow, to please him; for it will do me neither harm nor good." From that hour the extremity of the symptoms abated.

We have another notice of good Joseph Bradford in the account of a circumstance which occurred the following year. When Mr. Wesley was about to preach at Rye, a lady, residing two miles from the town, was exceedingly anxious to have him as her guest. So he ordered his chaise to be at the preaching-house door to take him up immediately after the service. Mr. Wesley narrates:—"She had sent a servant to show me the way; which was a road dirty and slippery enough, cast up between two impassable marshes. The man waited awhile, and then went home, leaving us to guide ourselves. Many rough journeys I have had; but such a one as this I never had before. It was one of the darkest nights I ever saw: it blew a storm, and yet poured down with rain. The descent, in going out of the town, was near as steep as the ridge of a house.

As soon as we had passed it, the driver, being a stranger, knew not which way to turn. Joseph Bradford, whom I had taken into the chaise, perceiving how things were, immediately got out and walked at the head of the horses, (who could not possibly keep their eyes open, the rain so violently beating in their faces,) through rain, wind, mud, and water; till, in less than an hour, he brought us safe to Carborough." Honour to the man who thus lovingly served the Founder of Methodism, and was ever ready to preach in his place at five o'clock in the morning, or any other time, when Mr. Wesley felt himself unequal to the task. When contriving to keep his eyes open, though the horses could not, Joseph Bradford was on his way to the Presidential chair, and to a seat infinitely higher. We are not surprised to read amid other bequests made in Mr. Wesley's will, this very suitable one: "My watch to my friend Joseph Bradford."

It would seem that the efforts of Mr. Bradford to restore unanimity throughout the Circuit, following those already made by Mr. Wesley and Mr. Rogers, were largely successful. When in the spring of 1785 the former visited the neighbourhood, he records nothing unfavourable, but was thankful for tokens of prosperity at Burslem and Congleton. In Macclesfield he again preached in Christ-church.

On Saturday, April 1st, 1786, Mr. Wesley examined the state of the Society at Macclesfield, and was encouraged by the result: he had the satisfaction of finding "a people much alive to God." The number of members in the Circuit had also increased. When Burslem was separated, eight hundred members were left to the old Circuit, but Mr. Bradford was hoping to return more than nine hundred at the ensuing Con-

ference. Possibly some of the Methodists might have begun to wish that their chapel was larger, so that Mr. Wesley might preach, as well as meet the Society in it; but it was very kind in Mr. Simpson to lend his church, and he still worshipped with them in their humble meeting-house on Sunday evenings.

A new place of worship had been erected in the Circuit—at Chapel-en-le Frith. One Monday forenoon this was crowded to hear Mr. Wesley. He had been at "Chapel" before, and had been pleased with the ardent piety of these dwellers among the hills, and he was not disappointed on this occasion. He certainly did not approve of all that he learned concerning their ordinary deportment. Nothing but the possession and manifestation of true religion in a more than ordinary degree saved the good folk at Chapel-en-le-Frith from a sterner rebuke than they received. Mr. Wesley ascertained that while they were full of love, Satan strove to push many of them to extravagance. "This appears in several instances:—1. Frequently three or four, yea ten or twelve, pray aloud all together. 2. Some of them, perhaps many, scream all together as loud as they can. 3. Some of them use improper, yea, indecent, expressions in prayer. 4. Several drop down as dead, and are as stiff as a corpse; but in a while they start up, and cry, 'Glory! Glory!' perhaps twenty times together. Just so do the French Prophets, and very lately the Jumpers in Wales, bring the real work into contempt." We may easily suppose that good Joseph Bradford would not have unmingled delight in bringing the case of "Chapel" and the new preaching-house before the attention of Mr. Wesley. Joseph had not travelled with him for years without perceiving his preference for order and reverence in God's house.

He must have been relieved when Mr. Wesley, having fully discerned the reality and gracious extent of the work in these recently rude and neglected districts, affirmed: "Whenever we reprove them, it should be in the most mild and gentle manner possible."

The early life of George Story, who was appointed Assistant at Macclesfield at the Conference of 1786, was very peculiar. While a child he seemed to be unconsciously preparing himself, and to have been prepared, for the duties of Editor, to which office he was appointed four years after leaving the Macclesfield Circuit. George was born at Harthill, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. When four years old he had learned the Church catechism, and repeated it to the clergyman. Before he was six years old he had read the Bible through several times, besides other books which came in his way, particularly "the History of the sufferings of the Protestants in the valleys of Piedmont." When about ten years of age he was led to try to pray from the heart, but was perplexed by the doctrine of predestination. He engaged himself to a bookseller, and, when he had leisure, read volumes by the dozen,—histories, novels, plays, and romances. Wearied with this desultory reading, he studied geometry and trigonometry, soon after geography and astronomy, together with botany, anatomy, and physic; and made acquisitions in several branches of natural philosophy. Once he determined to study the law, and began the perusal of "The Statutes at large." In the midst of his reading he found some deistical writings, and, for a season, yielded his mind to their influence. About the age of eighteen, the management of the printing-office fell to his care. He had a weekly newspaper to publish, paragraphs to select, the advertisements to prepare, the

press to correct, and the journeymen and apprentices to superintend. This flattered his vanity, and led him farther from God. When twenty years old he went to London. Being employed in abridging and printing the life of Eugene Aram, he was impressed with Aram's success in acquiring a knowledge of languages as well as sciences. He determined to excel, believing he could learn anything. But, as he was arranging his plans, the reflection was suggested to his mind:—"What did this man's wisdom profit him? It did not save him from being a thief and a murderer. He died as a felon, and his corpse was hung in chains." Eventually the restless seeker after satisfaction was led to the Saviour, and there found rest. He joined the Methodists, became an Itinerant preacher, and succeeded Joseph Bradford at Macclesfield.

When, on the last Saturday in March, 1787, Mr. Wesley was carefully considering the state of the Society in Macclesfield, that he might give suitable advice and also preach the more profitably in the church on the following day, he was pleasingly impressed by the manifestation of earnest godliness amid large worldly prosperity. As a town, the place had considerably improved since he first saw it. In size it had not augumented so rapidly as it was destined to do during the first quarter of the nineteenth century; but there was now more profitable employment for the people generally than making silk buttons, and appealing to Parliament to prevent his Majesty's liege subjects using any other. Most people were better supplied with the comforts of life than their parents had been; and some whose fathers were poor men, were rapidly becoming rich. Among the prosperous, several were Methodists. George Pearson had not become a learned man, but he

was no longer an indigent one. His time had been divided between his daily business and saving souls, and he had been successful in both departments. Many a poor sinner had been led to Christ by Mr. Pearson, and so saved from his sins. During the same period the good man had, by steady industry, somehow been acquiring a little property. Years had passed since John Ryle had become the first Methodist Mayor, and his worldly position had not declined. There were other Methodists who had been almost as successful. Indeed had it not been that Christ-church was almost as dear to them as the chapel, they might well have been ashamed of themselves that they had only thought and talked of pulling down the latter to rebuild it on a larger and more respectable scale. Mr. Wesley saw that some of his followers were becoming possessed of riches through the influences by which religion surrounded them. What would their children be? Would George Pearson's children tread in his footsteps? What would John Clulow, already known as "Lawyer Clulow" become? Would those young people who were better clad, more efficiently instructed, and who inherited numberless blessings as a result of their parents' profession and enjoyment of true religion, be themselves disciples of Jesus? That could not then be foretold. But Wesley could ask, What are the Methodists here in Divine things, now that many of them possess temporal things in abundance? The reply was satisfactory, "I went on to Macclesfield, and found a people still alive to God, in spite of swiftly-increasing riches. If they continue so, it will be the only instance I have known, in above half a century. I warned them in the strongest terms I could, and believe some of them had ears to hear."

It is possible that Mr. Wesley's constant solicitude respecting the perils attendant on wealth may have been called into special activity by the statement made by "a potter's lad" two days before at Burslem. There was such a lovefeast, we are told, as he had not witnessed for years, the result of there having been an outpouring of the Spirit at Burslem, the like of which had not been experienced for a long time in any part of the kingdom. At this lovefeast the youth referred to, who had recently found mercy, said: "At the prayer-meeting I found myself dropping into hell; I cried to the Lord, and He showed me He loved me. But Satan came immediately, and offered me *a bag of money, as long as my arm;* but I said, Get thee behind me, Satan." At Macclesfield some of the Methodists had now the opportunity of securing, without actual knavery, for themselves and for their children bags well filled with money. The aged and saintly minister trembled for them, while he admired the grace of God which still prevailed. So, not content with his warnings to the Methodists on Saturday in their own chapel, he preached on Sunday at the new church in the most awakening manner he could, "fearing nothing so much as lest a people so much at ease should settle upon their lees."

Seven days before Mr. Wesley's next visit to the town, his saintly and gifted brother Charles entered the heavenly rest. He had recently completed his eightieth year. On a marble tablet in City Road chapel his excellencies are recorded. It is there declared "He was the first who received the name of Methodist; and, uniting with his brother, the Rev. John Wesley, in the plan of Itinerant Preaching, endured hardship, persecution and disgrace, as a good

soldier of Jesus Christ; contributing largely by the usefulness of his labours, to the first formation of the Methodist Societies in these kingdoms. As a Christian Poet, he stood unrivalled; and his hymns will convey instruction and consolation to the faithful in Christ Jesus, as long as the English language shall be understood. He was born 18th of December 1708, and died 29th March, 1788."

As is well known, the brothers held somewhat different views of ecclesiastical order, but they were closely united by their fraternal affection, and by their supreme love to the Saviour and zeal for the salvation of souls. So, when John wrote to explain his conduct, and to ask for freedom of action together with undiminished brotherly-attachment, Charles's reply concluded with the words:—"We have taken each other for better for worse, till death us do—part? no: but eternally unite. Therefore, in the love that never faileth, I am your affectionate friend and brother."

The visit to the Circuit in April 1788 was marked by much both of sunshine and shade. On Thursday evening, at Congleton, the clergyman, the Mayor, and some of the aldermen were present to hear Mr. Wesley, but appeared astonished while the preacher opened and strongly applied the text: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." The next day Mr. Wesley proceeded to Macclesfield, but the elements were unpropitious. A violent storm raged during the journey. Any inconvenience resulting from the tempest was soon forgotten as, during Friday and Saturday, the state of the Society became apparent to the venerable servant of God. Doubtless some who had yielded to evil tempers had been lost to the Society; or, rather, they had lost the privileges they might have enjoyed.

But others had been saved from their sins and added to God's people; and the Methodists had lovingly forgotten all their conflicts respecting Circuit boundaries, preacher's house, change of stewards, and also concerning Captain Scott and high Calvinism. The little feuds had been removed, all was calm, and the work of God was going steadily on. On the Sabbath forenoon, however, Mr. Wesley must have thought that Macclesfield had become too quiet, and good Mr. Simpson must have experienced a degree of dissatisfaction. Where were his own people? Where were the Methodists? The Rev. John Wesley was well known to be the preacher, for he had been in Macclesfield since Friday, yet the church was only half filled. More than once, in the open air, and at short notice there had been "thousands upon thousands." Alas that novelty should gain more attention than excellence! The church was however filled in the afternoon, and on that occasion, and also at the chapel in the evening, great was the rejoicing in the Lord.

At the Conference of 1788, John Allen was appointed as the Assistant at Macclesfield. He had expressed a wish to be sent to the Circuit, from a very laudable wish to be of service to his own kindred. He was a native of Chapel-en-le-Frith. He knew that journeying among the hills of that part of Derbyshire often exposed the preachers to much hardship. But some of those who were most closely allied to him, and whom he had known in childhood, dwelt there, and he ardently desired to be the instrument of leading them to the Saviour. He had in former years often been depressed in his work, and tempted to leave the ministry; but, soon after reaching Macclesfield, he renewed the practice of keeping a journal; and wrote therein, "I

have now travelled twenty-two years,and I bless God that I have no complaint to make, except against myself. The Lord hath caused 'goodness and mercy to follow' me all my days, and I hope to 'dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'" It is evident that the prosperous condition of the Circuit into which he had come, and the kindness of the friends, soothed Mr. Allen's sensitive spirit. He afterwards recorded :—"Sometimes I have had liberty in preaching, but have often been much bound up. Whether I have given way to any evil, or whether I have neglected any duty, or done anything without a single eye to God's glory; or whether I am suffered to be straitened for my good; I cannot tell: if the former, I hope the Lord will show me wherein I have offended, and if the latter, I wish to bear it with patience and resignation. I would, by all I suffer, learn obedience. I see the importance of things eternal, and the neccessity of being always ready."

The Lord gave increase to the Society during this worthy man's superintendence, although he was often disposed to find fault with himself; and notwithstanding an event which apparently tended at first to weaken Methodism in the town, though without enfeebling the Church of Christ. Since Socinianism had crept in, and gained power at the Congregational chapel in King Edward Street, many of the orthodox had worshipped in the Methodist chapel. In the year 1788, however, these good folk succeeded in erecting a new chapel for themselves, in Townley Street, where they could hear Christ's Gospel preached, and also have that form of Church government which they preferred. Their places in the Methodist chapel must henceforth be filled up from the worldly, or

remain vacant. Through God's mercy they were filled up.

In the spring of 1789 the Methodists of Macclesfield were painfully disappointed. At that season, for fifteen years in succession, not reckoning several earlier visits, Mr. Wesley had been among them for a longer or shorter time. On the occasion of his last sojourn he had taken leave of them at the five o'clock service on Monday morning with special solemnity. Doubtless many of those present feared that their revered father, eighty-six years of age, would not be spared to see them again; and the marked seriousness and pathos of his farewell indicated that such thoughts were in his own mind. Mr. Wesley, however, a year after that leave-taking, was alive and well, but did not come to Macclesfield. Instead of taking his ordinary journey to the North of England, the venerable man itinerated for nearly four months in Ireland. On one former occasion Ireland had caused the sojourn to Macclesfield to be extremely short: this year there was no visit at all.

About the time that the Macclesfield Methodists were deploring this privation, a young friend of their Superintendent came over to see him, preached for him at Macclesfield in the morning, at Kettleshulme in the afternoon, and at Norman Wood in the evening. On Monday the youthful local preacher returned home to Manchester. There was, however, some talk in Macclesfield about his preaching. The Assistant told the friends that he very much wished his young friend to come out "to travel," and the friends said that, if he did so, they should like him to travel in their Circuit. So, at the following Conference, Robert Lomas was appointed as the junior preacher. He afterwards was

constrained to become Book-Steward, yet so yearned after the work of a pastor that, to the regret of many, he resigned the office, and re-entered the Itinerancy. During the whole year spent in the Macclesfield Circuit, he was unsettled whether or not to return home. His colleagues were all that he could desire, and he travelled the Round with more pleasure and profit than he expected. But he believed himself unequal to so high a task. In the record concerning him in the Minutes of 1810, the year after his death, we read:—"Robert Lomas, whose praise is in all our churches; a man of unblemished character, and of remarkable faithfulness towards all he had to do with."

On Tuesday, March 30th, 1790, Mr. Wesley entered Macclesfield for the last time. On the preceding evening he had preached at Congleton, the clergyman, Mayor, and other chief men being present. At Macclesfield there was a crowded congregation to hear the venerable preacher, and also on the Wednesday evening. No doubt all perceived that it was extremely unlikely that he would ever visit their town again. He was now in his eighty-seventh year, and during the past few months the infirmities of extreme old age had rapidly increased. On Thursday morning one of his horses died. Many years before, when the Methodists of Macclesfield were few and poor, they had provided a post-chaise for him, because he was unwell, and they deemed it unfit that he should ride on horseback. The final departure was also to be in a post-chaise. Arrangements were made concerning the carriage and surviving horse, and the needed chaise was procured. Then, on Thursday morning, April 1st, Mr. Wesley left Macclesfield, to enter it no more. Twenty-seven visits

had he paid to the place itself, besides those to the immediate vicinity. Forty-three years had passed since he preached his first sermon in the town. The last had at length, been delivered. Cheerfully he went on his way. Home was nigh!

CHAPTER XVI.

SOLEMN EVENTS. 1790—1798.

AT the Conference of 1790, assembled at Bristol on July 27th, our Founder, and the preachers present, must have regarded it as probable that he would never again preside over them. On the 28th of the preceding month Mr. Wesley had written in his journal: "This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years, I found none of the infirmities of old age; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated: but last August I found almost a sudden change. My eyes were so dim that no glasses would help me. My strength likewise now quite forsook me; and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot; only it seems nature is exhausted; and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till, 'The weary springs of life stand still at last.'" Yet, the day after making the above entry, the venerable man pursued his journeyings and preachings through Lincolnshire, where he then was: and, at the close of the ensuing Conference, the entry was once more made in the Minutes, "Joseph Bradford travels with Mr. Wesley."

Andrew Inglis, who was Assistant at Macclesfield in 1790, disappears from Methodism without leaving

any permanent mark. He did not "die in the work;" probably finding the toils of the Itinerancy too much for his strength. George Shadford, his senior colleague, had already distinguished himself in Methodistic effort, and became very pleasingly identified with the work of God in the Circuit. When young, he was deeply impressed by the death of a young woman to whom he had become attached. George was then with the militia, which had been called together. When, on returning home, he went to visit the grave of his friend, he unexpectedly saw the tombstone of another young woman who, he learned, had eagerly anticipated a ball, but who while dancing, about midnight, was taken ill and died. He eventually sought and found Divine mercy. As a Methodist Preacher he laboured successfully in England, and afterwards in America; and after his return to his native land, he still preached the Word. While in Macclesfield, however, his health failed. He settled in the Circuit, at Congleton; and so successfully employed the remnants of his strength that, at one time, there were present at the renewal of tickets a hundred members of his three classes, of whom ninety were clear in their Christian experience, many of them living in the enjoyment of "perfect love."

Mr. Shadford, while resident in Congleton, exerted the influence which he acquired so as to promote in various ways the comfort and well-being of the people there. As an instance of this, in minor matters, it has been recorded that, previous to his settling among them, the weavers who were attendants at the Methodist chapel had been accustomed to go thither on the Sabbath morning with their aprons on, rolled around their waists. Most likely the aprons were scrupulously clean, but, as they were suggestive of worldly toil, it

was certainly desirable that, however white they might be, they should be kept at home until Monday morning. Mr. Shadford so far gained the confidence of these good people of Congleton that they practically acknowledged their belief in his assurance that they could, during the Lord's Day, appear in public without their aprons, and still not be "high-minded" or conformed to the world.

During the last week in February 1791 Mr. Wesley was manifestly sinking. The Methodists of Macclesfield would doubtless be acquainted with his condition, in all its details. Their former Superintendents, Duncan Wright and James Rogers, were at the time both in the London Circuit. Joseph Bradford, who had still more recently dwelt among them, was in ceaseless attendance on the dying saint. Mrs. Rogers, who had lived among them from infancy, was also ministering to Mr. Wesley. The final illness was very brief. On Wednesday, February 23rd, the aged ambassador of Christ had once again proclaimed the message of his Lord: during the forenoon of the following Wednesday, March 2nd, 1791, he entered on his glorious reward. Mrs. Rogers wrote:—"The solemnity of the dying hour of that great and good man, I believe will ever be written on my heart. A cloud of the Divine presence rested on all; and while he could hardly be said to be an inhabitant of earth, being now speechless, and his eyes fixed, victory and glory were written on his countenance, and quivering, as it were, on his dying lips. No language can paint what appeared in that face! The more we gazed upon it, the more we saw of heaven unspeakable." Just before the venerable saint left his weeping friends, the sorrowing group knelt around his bed, while good Joseph Bradford prayed. The departing one faintly

whispered, "Farewell," and joined the glorified hosts above.

Within a few days of Mr. Wesley's death a young man, in his twenty-second year, named Thomas Allen, living in Macclesfield, found peace with God. He had been deeply convinced of sin eleven months before, and had at once joined a class. But, hitherto, unbelief had prevailed. Young Allen eagerly repaired to the means of grace, and never forgot the names and worth of the three ministers who were on the Circuit when he joined the Society—Messrs J. Allen, S. Gates, and R. Lomas. But at the Conference of 1790 all three left the Circuit, and poor Thomas was yet in darkness, groping his way to the Cross, and feeling his burden of sins to be intolerable. In March 1791, however, he found the Saviour, and was filled with peace and joy through believing. He now ardently desired to make known to others what the Lord had done for him, and was waiting to do for them. At that time he was not in affluent circumstances, and was not regarded as in any way remarkably gifted. But true religion developed his powers. As a leader and local preacher he was in later years greatly blessed and honoured of God in the salvation of sinners. The Lord also gave him worldly prosperity beyond what in early life he could have reasonably expected. But we shall have to refer to him again.

The Conference of 1791 was the first held after Mr. Wesley's death. John Goodwin was sent to Macclesfield as Superintendent. He was not entirely a stranger to the Methodists of the town and neighbourhood. Cheshire was his native county, and, some years previous to his appointment to the charge of the Macclesfield Circuit, he had laboured zealously in Cheshire in the capacity of a local preacher. As a travelling preacher

he was appointed, from time to time, to several of the most influential Circuits, and was highly esteemed and largely successful. He also laboured for a season in Ireland. One who knew Mr. Goodwin intimately described him as "the kindest of colleagues." He entered the heavenly rest in 1808, declaring that the God whom he had served was the strength of his heart, and would be his portion for ever.

During Mr. Goodwin's sojourn in Macclesfield a deep impression was made on the minds of the residents by the fall of a building which was generally known as "Clayton's cotton-shop." People in those days had not, each morning, intelligence of a startling character. We now cannot walk the streets without our eyes resting on placards announcing tidings of an exciting nature, but in 1792 railway communication was unknown, the postage of a letter from a distant place expensive; newspapers were rare, electric telegraphs not thought of, and Macclesfield was still a small town. When, therefore, any solemn event occurred in the borough or its immediate vicinity, thought and feeling were concentrated thereon with an intensity which we cannot well imagine. The people of Macclesfield were appalled to learn that six persons, their fellow-inhabitants, had been crushed to death. Eighty years after the sad occurrence, it was evident that some, who had heard the account in their youthful days from father and mother, still regarded "the fall of Clayton's cotton-shop" with an awe which no disaster of similar extent in their own day would occasion. At the time, in both the churches, in the Independent chapel, as well as in the Methodist chapel, the impression made was apparent, the congregations being for a season larger than usual, and more serious.

In 1792 the name of George Lowe appears as that

of the second preacher. Mr. Lowe's early history had been closely connected with the neighbourhood, and with the Macclesfield Circuit. He was born in what was then a rural village, the name of which was frequently spelled Leivenshulme, on October 1st, 1750. (o. s.) Early in that year George's mother heard John Bennet preach, at Stockport, and was deeply impressed by his discourse. Soon afterwards she heard the Rev. George Whitefield, in what was then called, "Ancotsfield." That occasion was a memorable one. Hundreds of people gave outward token of conviction, alarm, and penitence. Mrs. Lowe was one of those who were induced earnestly to seek the Saviour. Because of the benefit she derived from that service, she named her baby boy after the preacher.

George could afterwards recollect having serious thoughts concerning God, and a desire for His smile, when he was but five years old. In Levenshulme there was a godly man named Nicholas Haughton, in whose house the Methodist preachers occasionally delivered their Master's message; and thither George was taken by his mother. When he was eight years old, he there heard Mr. Robert Costerdine, then a local preacher living in Manchester. The little fellow was completely broken down, and never forget the text or his own distress. He soon afterwards obtained an encouraging view of the Saviour while Mr. Samuel Bardsley was preaching from the words:—"This man receiveth sinners." Young Lowe was eventually admitted on trial among the Methodists, by Mr. John Pawson, in 1767.

In the year 1770 Macclesfield was made the head of a Circuit. In that same year George Lowe's father removed with his family to Adlington,—then spelt

Haddlington,—in the vicinity of Macclesfield. Mr. Lowe thus removed because the lease of his farm had expired, and a relative had left him a small property at Adlington. For a little time George lost ground in religion. But there was in the place a Methodist class, originally formed by good John Barber. The leader in 1770 was William Percival, soon to be engaged in the Itinerant work, and almost at the outset to labour for two years in the Macclesfield Circuit. Mr. Percival called on George, and found him in a sorrowful state of mind. He persuaded the young man to go with him to the class-meeting, where God healed his backslidings. The light of God's countenance George Lowe never afterwards forfeited. During more than sixty years he continued "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

In 1773, Mr. Percival having been called into the work of the ministry, Mr. Lowe was appointed to be the leader at Adlington; and he not unfrequently travelled many miles to assist in conducting a prayer-meeting, and give "a word of exhortation." His efforts were highly valued, and he was urged to "come on the plan," as a local preacher. After due preparation, he delivered his first sermon, at Saltersford, in August 1777. Referring to that period, Mr. Lowe said, more than sixty years afterwards, "My dress, on that occasion, was not very clerical; but although it would have offended the fastidious taste of modern times, it was considered fashionable, and even elegant, in those days. I rose earlier than usual on that morning, spent some time in communion with God, in reading the Scriptures, and in looking over my subject. I then put on my fustian coat, a pretty red plush waistcoat, and a handsome pair of leather breeches. Thus equipped, I left

home, in much weakness and fear, to make what appeared to me a dangerous experiment. On arriving at Saltersford, I found the preaching-house crowded; but being there a few minutes before the time, I stepped into an ante-chamber, for the purpose of composing my mind, and imploring the aid of Divine grace. While I was there, a sharp shock of an earthquake occurred. It shook and rocked the building, and spread such alarm among the people that before I commenced the service, they were crying out, 'God be merciful to us sinners.'" Before the close of the service the preacher's voice could scarcely be heard amid the loud and pathetic supplications of his hearers. Several scores were awakened. Many of these speedily joined the Society, and continued in future years to walk with God.

At the Conference of 1788 Mr. Lowe was taken into the ranks of the Itinerancy and sent to Chester; and, after the lapse of four years, was sent to the Macclesfield Circuit, so that he would have to preach statedly at Saltersford, as one of the travelling preachers. He lived to be a very old man. Failing health and infirmities compelled him to retire from "the full work" in 1808. This was to him a sore trial, for he delighted in the service of his Lord. But he still did what he could. He resided at Congleton, not far from Macclesfield. Wondrously sustained amid much suffering and trouble, he was permitted to enter his ninetieth year, testifying to many whose parents and grandparents he had associated with, of the Lord's goodness, and eventually entering the glorious rest honoured and loved by all who knew him.

In the early part of 1793 Mrs. Clulow was removed to the "better land." Throughout the period of her widowhood the saintly woman had proved that the God

whom she had long loved and served was faithful to His promises. She daily looked to Him for help and comfort, and was daily enriched with His blessing. She had often pleaded at the mercy-seat for the extension of God's work, and had toiled, and given of her substance, that this might be effected. In her later days the devoted disciple exulted in the triumphs of the Gospel. She could call to mind how she had feared that the little "room" of former times would never be filled: but she had witnessed the erection of a chapel in Sunderland Street, and, while perceiving the need of a much larger structure, knew that there were those who meditated entering on the task of providing it. She used to hear Mr. Wesley in Christ-church, on the occasion of his annual visit, and had stood in the open-air to listen to preachers from Manchester or elsewhere, when they visited the town. But now during more than twenty years Macclesfield had been the head of a Circuit, with resident preachers, and had been more than once divided. So, now that this "mother in Israel" was about to rejoin Mr. Wesley and her many sainted friends, she could rejoice in God's goodness to her and to her people.

In her family there had not all been accomplished for which Mrs. Clulow had prayed and striven, yet there was much to be thankful for. John had not been converted; perhaps that was the occasion of more solicitude and sorrow of heart than everything else besides. But, so far as we can now learn, her elder son, William, was a God-fearing man. Early in 1784, the Rev. John Wesley executed a "Deed of Declaration," otherwise known as the "Deed-poll," which has been designated the Magna Charta of Methodism. The solicitor who was employed in the preparation of this

deed was William Clulow, John Clulow's elder brother. William's place of business was in Quality Court, Chancery Lane, London. The deed was attested by William Clulow, and Richard Young, "clerk to the said William Clulow." We may just observe, in passing, that though several preachers who hoped to find their names in "the Legal Hundred" were disappointed, both the preachers then stationed in Macclesfield were included. The Deed was executed on February 28th, 1784.

Five years later, Mr. Wesley made his will. This was dated the 20th day of February, 1789, and like the Poll deed was prepared by William Clulow, and attested by him. The second attestation, however, is that of "Elizabeth Clulow." Who was this Elizabeth Clulow? We may reasonably suppose that she would be some near relative of the solicitor. Was the good old Macclesfield Methodist visiting her son in London at the time? If so, Mr. Wesley who so well knew her, and highly esteemed her, would be pleased to have her as a witness to the signing of his "last Will and Testament."

Besides any comfort or hope Mrs. Clulow could find in her sons who were lawyers, she had much delight in her daughter Mary, and about this time had reason to rejoice with that daughter. During six years the young woman had met in class, and walked in the fear of God, yet could not rely on Christ as her Saviour. She was however seeking the Lord diligently. Bewildered, as many have been, Mary Clulow lived before God as a servant and not as a child. But she was urging her way to the mercy-seat, and so was sure to be led by her gracious Saviour out of the labyrinth and gloom in which she found herself.

One Friday, good Mr. Shadford, the Supernumerary, came from Congleton to preach at Macclesfield, and Mary was encouraged to look hopefully to God; and soon after, while engaged in prayer, she was filled with peace through believing. So good Mrs. Clulow felt a new joy in her latest moments. "Mary," said the dying mother, "I am going to leave thee in a troublesome world, fatherless and motherless, but I leave thee in the hands of God." While the lifeless body of the saint lay in the coffin, Mary often visited for secret prayer the room in which it lay, longing to join her mother in her blissful state, and repeating the hymn which commences, "Ah, lovely appearance of death!" etc. When the funeral was over, and daily tasks had to be resumed, her mind became composed, and she henceforth steadily pursued a pilgrimage in which her mother's example would be of the greatest advantage to her.

John Mason, who took charge of the Macclesfield Circuit, after the Conference of 1793, the first of three Methodist Preachers who have made the name honourable among their brethren, was an able and successful minister, and contrived to study several branches of science, without neglecting his proper work. During the thirteen years in which he was a Supernumerary, the old man found delight in researches in Natural History, while he was still diligent as a preacher and a pastor, so far as his strength admitted. Competent judges are said to have declared that in his knowledge of botany he was inferior to few in Europe, and that his botanical collections would do credit to the first Museum in the world, especially his collections of English plants, all gathered, preserved, classified, and described by himself. While in the Macclesfield Circuit, Mr.

Mason would have opportunities for adding to his stores, and might sometimes forget his cares and beguile the tediousness of his journeys, especially on the Derbyshire side of the Round, with observing the handywork of God. Certainly he cultivated with industry the part of the Lord's vineyard in which he had been appointed to labour.

At the Conference of 1794 Samuel Bardsley was again sent to the Circuit. This was the third time that the good man had been appointed to Macclesfield, though he stayed but one year on each occasion. He lived several years after this, his latest sojourn in Macclesfield. In 1818, when the oldest preacher in the Connexion, he attended the Leeds Conference. He left Leeds in company with a preacher, Francis Wrigley, whom he had known from his youth. Arriving at a country inn they took tea, and then sat near the door, in the summer twilight, talking of God's goodness throughout their long lives. Bardsley, after a time, complained of being unwell, and proposed retiring to rest for the night. Mr. Wrigley went with him towards his bed-room, but unable to proceed so far, Mr. Bardsley sat down on the top-most step of the stairs, and throwing his arm round his friend's neck said, "My dear, I must die." All was over! That affectionate servant of God had entered heaven.

About this time Ann Cutler, whose name was so well known to the Methodists of that period, and is not yet entirely forgotten, passed away from a dwelling in Macclesfield to the glorious mansion prepared for her in the heavenly Jerusalem. Her early days were spent at Ribchester, near Preston. While living there she heard William Bramwell, who had recently been brought into the enjoyment of the "great salvation," and who,

though not as yet an Itinerant preacher, was giving himself to the work of preaching with amazing earnestness and success. Ann Cutler was truly converted to God, and plentifully baptized with that "power from on high" of which Mr. Bramwell had so largely received. She became eminently holy, but was specially distinguished by "the grace of supplications." Her life seemed to be one of ceaseless prayer. There is every reason to believe that she was much, very much, in her closet, pleading with her heavenly Father in secret. She was rewarded openly. Mr. Bramwell, who published her biography, states:—"Very often ten or twenty, or more, were saved in one meeting. Wherever she went there was an amazing power of God attending her prayers." She visited many Circuits, and generally the results were extensive as well as blessed. To the end she was characterized by this spirit of ceaseless intercession, and by the sanctity of her life, as well as also by the success which might be expected from such eminent prayerfulness, holiness, and un-resting labour. During several of her later years she resided chiefly in Macclesfield, and thence she went to glory. Her mortal remains were interred in the grave-yard at Christchurch. We cannot doubt that Macclesfield Methodism derived much advantage from her residence in the town, and from her prayerful toils.

On May 1, 1796, Sunday-school tuition was begun in earnest in Macclesfield. There had previously been some teaching on a small scale in a "charity-school." The Rev. David Simpson had formed catechetical classes in connection with his church several years before, and had met with varying success. Indeed, as in more than one place, good people, Methodists and others, had endeavoured to gather the neglected children of their

neighbourhoods for religious instruction before Mr. R. Raikes of Gloucester, in June 1784, published his important statement concerning what he was doing, so in Macclesfield an effort had been made, especially by Mr. Simpson, in this direction. Mr. Wesley in 1785 had published Mr. Raikes's account, and commended to his Societies this work of Sunday-school instruction. A worthy man in Macclesfield, known as a godly and zealous Methodist, named Mr. John Whitaker, had pondered this subject, as he marked how many of the children were growing up in ignorance and vice. A room, which would hold eighty scholars, was generously offered, free of rent. A few persons were willing to help. So, on the first of May, 1796, the school was commenced, and on that day twenty-three boys and sixteen girls were admitted. The school was undenominational, and in its greatly enlarged form, remains so. Differences of opinion concerning the propriety of teaching writing and arithmetic, and other subjects, on the Sabbath, soon began to be discerned, and eventually Mr. Whitaker left the Methodist Society. Many other schools were gradually started by the different religious denominations. Yet that May-day must be regarded as an important era in the history of Macclesfield, and Methodists thankfully remember that Mr. Whitaker had been trained in Methodism.

Early in January 1797 a servant-maid, named Betty Cooper, died in a most triumphant manner. Betty was born in Macclesfield Forest, but when sixteen years of age came to the town, where she attended the new church, and also the Methodist chapel. When about eighteen she went to live in the family of the Rev. David Simpson, yet still retained her connection with the Methodists. Indeed, as her employer, though a

clergyman, worshipped with the Methodists, when he had opportunity, and knew that many of them were among his most regular and devout hearers, it was not likely that he would abridge the privileges prized by his maid-servant. So, during eight years more, the pious young woman profited by her great advantages, and endeavoured to adorn the Gospel of God her Saviour in all things. Then she sickened, but was enabled to triumph over pain and fear in a remarkable degree. The Methodist preachers, with Mr. and Mrs. Simpson, and others, were greatly edified by her happy end, as they had long admired the consistency of her life. Among her latest utterances she said:—"My evidence is clear; Jesus is precious to me:

'Angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come!'"

At the following Conference, that of 1797, Richard Reece was appointed as Superintendent. He was then entering on his eleventh year of travelling. At one time he had been regarded as likely to die young, of consumption; but he remained in the ministry sixty-three years, was twice President of the Conference, and in 1823 represented British Methodism in the American General Conference. When, in 1850, he departed this life, his last connected sentence was, "I am going to be for ever with the Lord,—for ever,—with the Lord." Miles Martindale, his senior colleague, afterwards became governor of Woodhouse Grove School, and in 1824 received the thanks of the Conference for his services in that capacity—only two days before his death. Doubtless he rejoiced in the approbation of his brethren, yet infinitely better was it that the Master should say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

During the winter of 1797–98 the Rev. David Simpson sought to attract the young people of Macclesfield from the frivolous and hurtful amusements in which many of them were disposed to spend their evenings, by delivering a course of lectures on Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." A large upper room in a factory had been for some time used as a Sabbath-school, and in this room Mr. Simpson delivered the lectures on Wednesday evenings. The effort was decidedly successful. As the series proceeded, the room became better attended, until at length it was densely crowded. On Wednesday February 14th, 1798, this was the case. On that night a young person named Martha Harden called on her friend, (afterwards known to many as Mrs. W. Higginbotham) that they might go together. But Martha had to go alone: her friend replied, "Father and mother have gone to class; they said I had better not go to the lecture, because the room of late has been so crowded." The little girl, thus obedient to her parents had, though only twelve years of age, been meeting in class four years. She would have been much pleased to go with her friend, but tried to be content. After a time she observed a great commotion in the street, and heard loud shouts, "The factory floor has fallen!" So it proved. While Mr. Simpson was proceeding with the lecture, suddenly the middle beam broke, and the persons crowded together on that part of the floor fell through. Such was the weight of the people thus precipitated beneath, and the force of their fall, that the floor on which they alighted gave way also, and they were plunged to the bottom of the building. The night was dark, the cries and groans of the sufferers were appalling, and the horror of the situation was extreme. It was feared by most that the walls would give way,

and that the whole assembly would be buried in the ruins. Providentially, however, the walls did not fall, and that part of the floor on which Mr. Simpson and those near to him were standing or seated remained firm. Great efforts were made to rescue those who had been injured. Martha Harden was observed inquiring for her parents, who had been present, and for others whom she knew, and trying to help those who seemed most hurt. At length, when the medical men had attended to the greater number of the sufferers, one person said, "Martha, you seem to be as badly hurt as any one. Why do you press your hands to your breast? You've been caring for everybody but yourself." Alas, Martha had received mortal injury: she was indeed the only one whose death manifestly resulted from that sad catastrophe. After her almost super-human efforts for others she had sat down, quietly pressing her hands to her bosom. She was taken to bed, and shortly afterwards died. About seventy persons were on this occasion injured, many of them very seriously.

About four months after the painful occurrence just recorded, a disaster still more fatal happened, on June 2nd, 1798, in the Methodist chapel. This small building had long been acknowledged to be inadequate to the wants of the people worshipping there, and unworthy of the social position which some of them occupied. Mr. Ryle and a few others had taken preliminary steps to have it replaced by a larger and better structure, but they had been discouraged, and had, perhaps too readily, given up their purpose. Besides, in some respects, especially during Mr. Wesley's lifetime, Christ-church answered for the great gatherings for sermon-hearing and sacramental occasions. So the little chapel, now regarded as shabby, still remained.

While things were in this condition Dr. Coke came to Macclesfield. He would doubtless have been very welcome to occupy the pulpit of Christ-church, as Mr. Wesley used to do: but, possibly, the Doctor was about to make an appeal on behalf of Methodist Missions, which would scarcely be allowed in any Episcopal church. So good Mr. Simpson, as he could not invite his friend to his pulpit, on this occasion, went to hear him in the Methodist chapel, and there occupied a seat in Mr. Ryle's pew. Three or four Methodist preachers, in addition to Dr. Coke, were in the pulpit, and the chapel was densely crowded, while a multitude outside clamoured for admission. Just before the sermon, one of the preachers suggested that persons standing in the aisles might be allowed to stand in front of those seated in the pews, that some of the people outside might thus gain admission. A woman in the gallery was observed to make a deprecatory motion to the preacher who offered this suggestion. It was, however, partially carried out. Dr. Coke then read his text, and was in the act of repeating it, when an alarm arose that the gallery was giving way. It was afterwards believed that the woman, who had by signs objected to the introduction of more people, pushed her way forward to the front of the low gallery, apparently wishful to spring over, or to throw a child she held into the arms of friends below. A panic ensued,—the people soon became frantic and uncontrollable. The remembrance of the awful catastrophe which had so lately occurred at Mr. Simpson's lecture was present to the minds of all, and excited many to the wildest terror. Dr. Coke and the preachers remained calm, and assured the people there was no danger. Mr. Simpson sat still at the door of Mr. Ryle's pew, and would not allow the

young ladies, or any one else therein, to join the excited throng. But the staircases and doorways were soon choked up by the prostrate bodies of those who had been thrown down in the struggle to get out. Many leaped from the gallery into the body of the chapel, and others from the windows to the outside. Numbers were thus seriously injured. Several were killed. A man, leaping from a window, alighted on a woman beneath: he was uninjured, but she was killed at once. When, at length, those who had preserved composure, and had waited until egress was safe, left the building, they saw, laid on the ground, which was then covered with grass, several corpses, arranged in mournful order, awaiting means of conveying them to their respective homes.

CHAPTER XVII.

NEW SUNDERLAND STREET CHAPEL.

1798—1804.

AT the Conference of 1798 Richard Reece, George Marsden, and James Townley were appointed to travel in the Macclesfield Circuit. Each of these ministers was, afterwards, President of the Conference; Mr. Reece in 1816, and also in 1835; Mr. Marsden in 1821, and also in 1831; and Mr. Townley in 1829. On a subsequent occasion there was a similar appointment to Macclesfield of three ministers all of whom afterwards occupied the Presidential chair. In 1798, however, the special administrative abilities of the three Macclesfield preachers had evidently not been discerned, as John Goodwin, of Northwich, was Chairman of the District At that time Macclesfield was included in the Chester District, in which no more than thirteen Itinerant preachers were stationed.

When Mr. Reece returned to Macclesfield, with the two colleagues who were just entering on the Circuit, the task of building a new chapel was before them. Mr. Ryle, and those who were willing to help in such an erection, had hitherto allowed the matter to stand over for further consideration, because some who ought

to have contributed were unwilling to do so. The catastrophe which happened in June 1798 seemed as a judgment on all concerned. One of Mr. Ryle's daughters, then in early womanhood, urged on her father the importance of proceeding without delay. She said to him:—"Papa, you must go on: the work is God's; and if they never subscribe anything towards it, the whole expense will be nothing to you. It will only be deducting a quota from each of our fortunes, and I will willingly give mine." Mr. Ryle was greatly delighted by the urgency of his daughter, and also by finding that the other members of his family coincided with the generous proposal. He therefore resolved that he would at once enter heartily into the important task, and found that many were disposed to join him. The Lord had greatly blessed the Methodists,—certainly beyond their own expectations,—or they would not have been thus compelled to erect a new and larger chapel before the first erected on the Sunderland Street site had existed twenty years. We find in the new Trust-deed that some names are absent that were on the earlier deed, but a greater number of fresh names. With Mr. Ryle's name, those of two of his sons are now associated:—

John Ryle,	Samuel Braddock,
John Ryle,	Thomas Smallwood,
Joshua Ryle,	James Frost,
George Pearson,	Daniel Rowson,
Ralph Burgess,	Joseph Wilde,
Samuel Bradshaw,	John Birchenall,
Lawrence Frost,	Thomas Allen.

At the time this chapel was erected, Methodism had

taken a considerable hold on Macclesfield. Not only did "the common people" hear the Word gladly, but many who were regarded as "highly respectable" in the little town were members of the Society, or were regular attendants at the public services. It was regarded as something noteworthy that at this period five aldermen were seat-holders in Sunderland Street chapel. The Methodists were no longer a very poor people. The pew-rents, from July 1802 to April 1803, inclusive, amounted to more than £148 pounds, which was at that time a considerable sum.

The new chapel was in the course of erection from July 1798 to December 1799. It cost £2,400. A very minute account of the expenditure is still extant. The first item is threepence for the postage of a letter. Among other entries is one of two shillings for a pair of clogs, most likely intended for the use of a labourer in treading the lime.

To some, one or two circumstances respecting the seat-rents may be interesting. The gallery chiefly, if not exclusively, furnished the rents. It would seem that the body of the chapel was principally devoted to the service of those who were either unable or unwilling to pay for accommodation. It was so arranged that a portion of those who sat downstairs could be almost concealed, if they preferred: a very high partition screened the timid from sight. In the gallery those sat, aldermen and others, who could and would contribute to the expenses incurred for their benefit. The "gallery-stewards" only seem to have handed moneys over to the treasurer of the Trust-estate.

It is observable that soon after the chapel was opened, the "gallery stewards," were directed to contribute from the seat-rents for the general purposes

of the Circuit, and that this was continued. Thus ran the entries:—

1802.				
Sept. 16.	To July Quarter-Day for extra Goods and general Collection	7	0	0
	To Charles Bostock for making a bookcase in Mr. Bunting's room	2	0	0
1803.				
April 20.	James Hamson for shutters for Mr. Entwistle's house	1	15	9
1806.				
Sept. 25.	To Mr. T. Allin for Quarterage . . .	8	0	0
	To Mr. T. Allin £10 0 0; Mark Meller 50/	12	10	0
1810.				
March 30.	Quarterly Board and Singers . . .	12	10	0
1811.				
Jan. 1.	Quarterly Board and Singers . . .	12	10	0
,, 3.	Needham and Son, paper and hanging .	3	1	0
,, 8.	Brocklehurst and Co., Carpets, etc. . .	6	8	0
,, 10.	John Whitaker, for Linen, etc. . . .	6	0	0
,, 16.	D. Burton and Sons, six pieces of furniture	16	0	0

Such entries were common. There are others which may be thought either instructive or amusing.

1802.				
Sept. 16.	To Mr. John Clulow for making deeds .	18	18	0
	To d° for a copy of deeds	1	3	0
1804.				
Oct. 8.	Paid Mr. T. Allen 3/- which he had advanced for Mr. Clulow's pew-rent which he would not pay . . .	0	3	0
1809.				
Dec. 9.	Letter to London 9d., a frank^{t} one 1d. .	0	0	10
1819.				
March 3.	Allowance to Chapel fund £2 2 0	7	7	0
	Contributions d° 5 5 0			

In the minute-book we read:—

Sept. 7th, 1810. "Agreed by all present that a sum not exceeding seventy-five pounds shall be allowed out of the

gallery-money towards defraying the expenses to be gone into for buying additional furniture and other necessaries for both of our preachers' houses; but it is at the same time recommended that the stewards do with as little as possible."

While the Methodists of Macclesfield were gratefully exulting in the erection of their new chapel, they were greatly excited and distressed by the alarming illness of the Rev. David Simpson. Earnest disciples of Jesus, of whatever denomination, had long regarded Mr. Simpson as a friend and pastor; during twenty-six years he had toiled with loving zeal and patience among them, yet it might have been reasonable to hope that he would still have been spared for many more years. He was but in his fifty-fourth year, and his friend, the Rev. John Wesley, though he had regarded himself as dying when about that age, had been spared to see his eighty-eighth year. Mr. Simpson, however, was not to be thus permitted to live to extreme old age.

Though his popularity had been very great, he had experienced much trouble. The annoyances he had undergone from persons in authority in the Established Church, had been painful and continuous, and he had long pondered the question,—"Shall I remain a clergyman?" A long and earnest letter, dated February 9th, 1799, written by Alexander Mather, was sent to dissuade him from his purpose of leaving the Establishment. But Mr. Simpson's mind had at length become fully decided. A second edition of his "Plea for Religion" had been prepared, containing statements which its author regarded as important, the publication of which would render it undesirable that he should remain a clergyman of the Church of England. He had therefore fixed the day on which he would, from the

pulpit, announce his resignation of the office, and state his reason for so doing.

That farewell sermon was never to be preached: suffering, sorrow, and death were at hand. One day in the summer of 1798, while talking in his study with a poor man, Mr. Simpson was smitten on the left side by palsy: from this, however, he recovered. A few weeks later, he had to mourn the death of his daughter Elizabeth, Mrs. Lee, and wrote: "We are left childless at home, and she was the only daughter of her mother." Mrs. Simpson's health was greatly enfeebled by her assiduous watching over her beloved child during her mortal sickness. Early in 1799 she was herself confined to her room, and it was apparent that her end was nigh. When convinced that such was the case, she said:—"God is faithful; He has promised never to forsake them that trust in Him." Before the death of Mrs. Simpson, her husband was attacked by typhus fever in a very malignant form. They were confined to adjacent rooms, and could only hear of each other's sufferings and holy triumph through Christ. Mrs. Simpson died March 13th, 1799, and Mr. Simpson on March 24th, about twelve hours previous to the time he had fixed for announcing from the pulpit, in Christ-church, his purpose of seeking a sphere in which he could more freely carry out his plans for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. He died trusting in the Saviour. Among his latest sayings were these:—"Tell the people I am not dying as one without hope." "The way seems hard; but it is the way the children of God all go, and I do not wish to be exempted from it. I know that my Redeemer liveth. I feel Him precious. He supports me under all. O that I were able to express all I feel!" "For to me to live has been 'Christ,' and to

die will be 'gain.'" He was interred amid the sighs, and groans, and tears of an immense multitude: it was computed that three thousand people had pressed into Christ-church on the occasion. None felt the loss more deeply than did the Methodists of Macclesfield. They had been accustomed to derive great advantage from his ministrations; they had often seen him worshipping with them in the old chapel when one of their own preachers occupied the pulpit; they had long been identified with him in every good word and work; and they had heard him speak, standing in the gallery of Sunderland Street chapel, at their lovefeasts. When Mr. Reece preached a funeral sermon in that chapel, all who were present felt that in the death of Mr. Simpson they had sustained an irreparable loss.

Only a few weeks after the death of this excellent clergyman and his wife, one who had been much attached to them, Miss Ryle, rejoined them in the regions of light. When she urged her father to proceed with the new chapel, whether certain others would help in the work or not, and expressed her willingness to have a smaller dower, she little thought how soon she would have done with all earthly things. Few young ladies had at that time a brighter prospect; she was beautiful, and vigorous, and refined, and wealthy, and beloved. But best of all, she was striving to lay up treasure in heaven. Her parents' home was adjoining that of Mr. Simpson on Park Green. Perhaps it was not prudent that she was allowed to visit him in his illness; she fell a victim to the same disease by which he was removed. To the unutterable anguish of her parents, she was taken from them in her twenty-fourth year.

Among other honoured names occurring in the list of Trustees for the new chapel, is that of Mr. Thomas

Smallwood. He was born at Chapel-Milton, September 22nd, 1741. When he was about four years of age, Mr. Wesley preached near to that village. It was on a Sunday afternoon, about five o' clock, and the preacher took his stand near to a mill-pond, a vast number of people being gathered together. The miller, however, was opposed to this new sect, of which it is probable he knew nothing. Not daring to assault the itinerant clergyman who appeared to have gained the favour of the crowd, he adopted a plan which he hoped would spoil the preaching. He let out the water, regardless of the inconvenience and loss which such a procedure would entail on himself. He knew that the water would fall with a loud noise near the multitude, so that the preacher would most likely be inaudible. In this the man was disappointed. Mr. Wesley had already preached three sermons on that day, and had travelled far, but his voice was so wonderfully strengthened that this fourth sermon, mill-stream notwithstanding, was heard to the outskirts of the crowd. If Thomas Smallwood was present on that occasion, as is not unlikely, he would not be able to understand what was said. But an elder sister, who about that time became a follower of Christ, induced Thomas afterwards to hear both Mr. Wesley and other Methodist preachers; and when about sixteen years old, the lad joined the Society, and became a very consistent and a very happy disciple of the Lord Jesus.

While yet young he was deprived by death of his father, but by industry and economy he was enabled to support his widowed mother and the children still younger than himself. Often, after a hard day's work he would trudge three or four miles to hear a sermon, or to a prayer-meeting. On Sunday, with some simple

meal in his pocket, he would walk a great distance to hear the Word of God. On these occasions, and also when on market-days he went to the town with garments which he had dyed for customers made into a pack and placed on his shoulders, and returned with a similar bundle of articles needing dyeing, he solaced himself, during the long journey over bleak hills and dales, with sacred song until his heart often "danced for joy."

When about forty years of age he removed to Macclesfield, and witnessed the erection of the first Sunderland Street chapel. At the time when the new chapel was commenced, in 1799, he had attained a position as a silk-dyer which justified his accepting the responsibilities of trusteeship. He lived to see Brunswick chapel built. Now it so happened that George Pearson had a daughter who, when a child, and known as "little Martha," had sat on Mr Wesley's knee, while that revered man shared the hospitality of her father's home. Mr. Smallwood had had too many family cares to marry early. But he at length took a fancy to Martha, and they became husband and wife. In future years the Rev. John Bowers married Esther, one of the children of Thomas and Martha Smallwood. One of Esther's brothers became a Wesleyan-Methodist minister; and another a Macclesfield Methodist, and the "father" of Macclesfield Methodists. Mary Ann, Esther's sister, died gloriously happy, after a holy life, in 1823. Her father was then in his eighty-second year. On January 5th, 1829, in his eighty-eighth year he entered the heavenly rest, employing his latest breath in praising God, and pronouncing a benediction on each member of his family. His latest intelligent act was to point upwards with a smiling countenance.

At the Conference of 1802 the preachers appointed

to the Macclesfield Circuit were Joseph Entwisle, George Morley, and Jabez Bunting. For the second time it happened that of the three Macclesfield preachers each was, afterwards, elected to the Presidential chair: Mr. Entwisle in 1812 and in 1825; Mr. Morley in 1830; and Mr. Bunting in 1820, 1828, 1836, and 1844.

During his residence in Macclesfield Mr. Entwisle had to endure the loss of his wife, to whom he was tenderly attached. She died at the early age of thirty-three, but, through her Saviour, she was enabled to triumph over death. She said:—"Though I feel as a wife and a mother, yet I can say, I am perfectly resigned to the will of my heavenly Father: for I am persuaded that what He does, will, eventually, be for our good and His glory. I can say, 'O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

Lights and shadows blend during the earthly pilgrimage. While Mr. Entwisle was becoming anxious respecting his much-loved wife, Mr. Bunting, then the popular young preacher, thought he had discovered one who would prove an eminently valuable wife, when Methodist usage would allow him to marry. Miss Maclardie's father, as we have seen, had been organist at Christ-church in Mr. Wesley's days, and her brother had succeeded to the position. Miss Maclardie does not appear to have been, at that time, identified with Methodism. But she was a disciple of Christ, and learned to love Mr. Bunting. So all the rest was arranged without difficulty. She joined the Society about the time he left the Circuit: two years afterwards, they were married; and a good wife she proved.

While Mr. Bunting travelled in the Circuit, lodging

with his Superintendent in the Sunderland Street house, he formed a strong attachment to Mr. and Mrs. T. Allen, who manifested much kindness towards him. Mr. Allen, whom we have previously mentioned, was then a prosperous man, yet very industrious, very homely, and in some respects peculiar. He was born in 1770, was converted to God and joined the Society in 1790, became an accredited local preacher in 1796, and was, during a lengthened period, a very zealous labourer in the Lord's vineyard. He lived to be the oldest local preacher on the Macclesfield plan.

Long after persecution had ceased in the town, and throughout the Circuit generally, there were places to which it was scarcely safe for a Methodist preacher to go. One of these was Dingle Smithy. It was, on one occasion, reported that wicked men resident there had declared that "the next preacher who went would rue having done so." In consequence of this the brother who was appointed dared not go. Mr. Allen heard of this, and proffered to supply his place. He rode a strong black mare, which had borne many a messenger of the Gospel to the scene of his ministrations. At the time the preacher was expected, the opponents of Methodism had drawn cart-ropes across the road, knowing that, as it was already dark, the ropes could not be seen. They then hid themselves in the hedges, that they might hear the crash and scream as the rider fell. Whether the horse which carried Mr. Allen discerned the ropes, or touched them, is uncertain, but it suddenly turned, and rushed impetuously towards the very spot where one of the miscreants was hidden. Terror-stricken, the man shouted aloud, "Stop, Sir, and I'll lower the ropes. Stop! Stop, Sir!" The ropes were accordingly lowered, and the preacher passed on. Most likely those

who had devised the villany had had enough for one night. A further annoyance probably was the work of accomplices who knew not as yet of their comrades' terror. Mr. Allen's fortitude was again to be tested. In the house where he was about to preach, there sat a strange-looking being arrayed in an ample cloak and huge wig, like some sage of olden time. As the preacher announced his text the figure rose, and made a solemn bow. For a moment Mr. Allen was confused, and forgot the passage on which he was about to speak. In glancing down the page in search for it, his eye rested on the words :—"Suffer me that I may speak ; and after that I have spoken, mock on." (Job xxi. 3.) This verse he read as a text, and then proceeded to announce his message and expostulate with his opponents. From that night Dingle Smithy was accessible to Methodist preachers.

One day Mr. Allen overtook one of the members of his class, carrying a load. "Sally," he said, "what is there in the bag on your back?" "A few coals, Sir, I've been buying." "Why, Sally, that's a queer way to carry a bag. What do *you* know about carrying coals? I'll show you how it ought to be done. Now, don't talk. Put them on my shoulders. There, that's the way." So he carried them as far as he was going her road. The next day a cart laden with coal stopped at her door, and the driver said to Sally, "Where shall I put 'em down, Missis?" "Nowhere," she answered ; "they are not for me." "They are," the man replied ; "Maister Allen has sent them."

Here is another pleasing illustration of his character. "How are you, Samuel, and how's the wife, and that last baby?" "My wife is only weakly, Sir." "Come to my house, Samuel, and you shall have a

bottle of wine for her." Samuel went. "Here's the wine. Now don't you go and sell my bottle. It's marked. Bring it back when empty. You need not bring *that* back, man," a silver coin accompanying the last sentence. A second bottle of wine was given, and the empty bottle returned. "There, Samuel," Mr. Allen said, "that's all. I shall give thee no more at present."

Mrs. Allen was removed by death in 1810. She had become as a "mother in Israel," and was universally esteemed. Of her the Rev. George Marsden wrote:—"She was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile." Many a preacher, besides Jabez Bunting, and many a preacher's wife, had reason to remember her thoughtful and generous kindness.

Mr. Allen was long spared. Long after there was any real need for his doing so, he worked in his dye-house. He afterwards undertook the duties of chapel-keeper at Sunderland Street, though, of course, without fee. When, through the bequest of his uncle, "Allen House" became his property, he gave it to be a preacher's house. The building was enlarged and made into dwellings for two ministers. The expense of this alteration was defrayed by voluntary contributions among the friends generally.

At the Conference of 1804 Congleton was divided from Macclesfield, and made the head of a Circuit, two preachers being appointed to each of the Circuits. Those stationed at Macclesfield were the Rev. Joseph Bradford, who had been President the year previous, and the Rev. John Riles.

During that year, Joshua Thorley joined the Society. He was born at Henbury. When twelve years of age he was put apprentice to Mr. Buxton, grocer, in Macclesfield. His mother, an excellent woman, had

been left a widow, but contrived, on the farm at Henbury, to support her family. Joshua's sister had given her heart to the Lord, joined the Methodists, and led the younger children to hear the preachers. Though Mr. Buxton watched carefully over the behaviour of his apprentices, young Thorley had not decided for Christ when his apprenticeship expired. He then went for a time on a visit to Manchester, hoping to hear of a situation. He felt, however, a great desire to return to Macclesfield, where, eventually, he entered the employment of Mr. Hurst. Finding that his new employer went to Sunderland Street chapel, he accompanied him. He was deeply impressed by what he heard. A sermon preached by Mr. Riles, from the text, "That there should be time no longer," aroused him to earnest effort for his salvation. During this year Lorenzo Dow, from America, visited Macclesfield, where he preached in the Methodist chapel at five o'clock in the morning. Joshua Thorley attended the services and was led to cry for mercy. Thus he sought and found the Lord. Salvation was imparted to him while at a class-meeting, during the singing. He recorded:—"I found such light and love springing up in my heart as no language can express. . . . . I went home rejoicing in the God of my salvation, and from that day to this I have been a happy man."

Mr. Thorley soon became of eminent service in the Society, being prepared cheerfully to fulfil any task which was assigned to him, and rapidly acquiring aptitude to discharge efficiently all the duties which he undertook. He soon became a pillar in the Church of Christ. During a lengthened period he discharged, with affection and fidelity, the offices of Class-leader, Circuit-steward, Trustee, and Sunday-school superin-

tendent. He took a leading part in the establishment of Wesleyan-Methodist Sunday-schools in Macclesfield; and the Centenary School may be fairly regarded as a monument of his generosity, energy, and persevering toil. Others gave and laboured, but he was specially their leader in the godly enterprise. He was also prominent in promoting the erection of the chapel at Bollington, and of the new schools at the Brunswick chapel.

The character of Mr. Thorley was justly admired by many who were not Methodists. During a period of twenty-three years he was the Secretary of the Macclesfield Dispensary. Few had the opportunity of knowing, or cared to estimate, the self-denying zeal and work needed for that post at that time; yet many had a general impression that he who occupied it must devote a great amount of time and money on behalf of the suffering poor. Those who were in distress, privation, and perplexity, and needed other aid than that given at the Dispensary, rightly judged that there was no better place to repair to than the shop or dwelling of Mr. Thorley. He had to pay the penalty, a blessed one indeed, of goodness: he had evidenced that he was a friend of the sorrowful, and the sorrowful acted accordingly.

To earnest Methodist preachers Mr. Thorley was an unvarying friend. Some of these, who were in a more than ordinary degree devoted to their work, had much to endure. At times their health would be feeble, or their families were afflicted, or some person of influence had proved unfaithful to God, or schemes for evangelical aggression had failed, or popular prejudice and anger had been aroused, or in some other way the preacher was in trouble. While faithful to God, such an one was

well assured that he had a firm friend, and wise, in Joshua Thorley.

It is to be regretted that, soon after he found peace with God and joined the Methodists, he ceased to keep any continuous record of his religious experience. Towards the close of life he did, however, make a few entries, one or two of which will give some insight into his inner experience. They are taken from a "Biographical Sketch," penned by the Rev. R. Jackson, and inserted in the "Magazine" of May, 1848:—"January 1st, 1839. I feel thankful to God that He has spared me another year. The last two years, I think, I have experienced more spiritual improvement than in any former years; and I hope that, if I am spared, this will exceed them all. The last year has indeed been a year of great trial. My dear son, my only child, has, by an inscrutable Providence, been taken from us. From the bottom of my heart I thank God that He has enabled us to bear this heavy stroke without giving way to immoderate grief. We both of us submit to the Divine will, and are resolved, in the strength of grace, to give ourselves more fully to God: and, as we have no children for whom to provide, to be more liberal in our contributions towards the support of the Church of the living God, and to the poor of His flock."

And again: "January 30th, 1839. I feel this day a blessed confidence in God. His ways are indeed ways of pleasantness, and His paths, paths of peace. Ten thousand worlds are as nothing when compared with the salvation of the soul. Ten thousand worlds, the Lord being my Helper, should not draw me from the faith I now have in the Author of this salvation."

In January 1844, the first symptoms appeared of the affliction which terminated Mr. Thorley's valuable life.

At the beginning of the month he thus wrote:—"Thanks be to God my Redeemer, I have entered upon another year. The conclusion of the old year, and the commencement of the new, have been attended with very serious reflections. I closed the old year with feelings of deep humiliation before God, occasioned by a sight of my great unfaithfulness and many errors. I earnestly besought the Lord to forgive me, and praised Him that I had not been cut down as one that 'cumbereth the ground.' I began the new year with an earnest desire to be clothed with humility as with a garment, to be more useful in the Church, and to be more constant and fervent in prayer to God. I was, as usual, at the watch-night services in the house of God; and when the clock was on the point of striking twelve, I was powerfully reminded of that approaching period when I shall be as near the eternal world as I then was to another year. My whole soul said,

'Jesus, vouchsafe a pitying ray,
Be Thou my Guide, be Thou my Way,
To glorious happiness!
Ah! write the pardon on my heart,
And whensoe'er I hence depart,
Let me depart in peace.'

"The past year was one of many, many mercies; but it was also a year of great affliction. It pleased God during its course to take from me my dear wife, whose life was a continued act of devotedness to God. Her reliance on the great atoning Sacrifice for salvation was unshaken, and her death was triumphant. It is well for me that I know that 'all things work together for good to them that love God.' I desire to submit. Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done! Thirty-three years was she the companion of my life. She was

indeed the Lord's gift to me. We never had a jarring string. To God be all the glory."

Mrs. Thorley, to whom the bereaved husband thus affectionately and sorrowfully refers, was a most excellent woman. Those who had the opportunity of closely observing her conduct, conversation, and temper, during many years, regarded her as a perfect model of godly womanhood. No doubt she discerned blemishes in herself as she drew near to the throne of grace, and bowed amid the brightness proceeding thence; but her acquaintances seldom thought they perceived any fault in her. In her character was a rare combination of Christian excellencies. She was considerate, generous, energetic, self-denying, spiritual, and invariably cheerful. Towards the close of life, during a protracted period, she suffered exceedingly from that dreadful disease, cancer; yet extreme pain only more fully developed the loveliness of her Christ-like graces.

We will venture to mention a trifling incident which will serve to show how she constantly desired the comfort of others, while never at ease herself, and often in sore agony. A friend one day received from Mr. Thorley an invitation to dinner. When he presented himself he was thus accosted by his host:—"You are kind to come, and I am very glad to see you; but I may as well tell you that I had no special regard for your comfort when I sent for you. I did so chiefly that my dear wife may enjoy her dinner. It so happens that we have a turkey, and Mrs. Thorley, bless her! never enjoys anything which is a little extra, unless somebody in addition to ourselves shares it. We must either send a portion to a friend, or some sufferer, or we must invite a friend. So I sent for you."

The kind-hearted thoughtfulness thus playfully

alluded to by her husband was manifested by most self-denying and generous attention to her kindred, to sick friends, and to poor neighbours. It was astonishing to what an extent she would forget her own sufferings. In 1832 she submitted to a very severe surgical operation, which she thought would prove fatal. It was, however, so far successful that she was spared ten years longer. Then, when her agony was often very great, and her end drew nigh, she was blessedly sustained. "How can you endure so much," said a friend," without complaining?" "Complaining!" she replied, "I know nothing that would justify complaint, but much that calls for constant thankfulness. 'The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.' I was thinking of those beautiful words, 'We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'"

This handmaid of the Lord entered the heavenly rest, exulting in the all-sufficiency of God, August 23rd, 1843, in her fifty-sixth year. On March 25th, 1844, Mr. Thorley rejoined his much-loved partner, in his sixtieth year. During their married life they had been helpers of each other's faith, and zeal, and joy; and they were not long divided. Soon were they permitted again to see each other in that bright land of life, where they are "as the angels of God." Among the Methodists of Macclesfield of that period there were many godly disciples, whose record is on high; but, perhaps, no more beautiful specimen of the blessedness of true religion was furnished by any of them than was witnessed in the home of Mr. Thorley.

In the year 1803, Mrs. Bennett, formerly Grace Murray, died at Chapel-en-le-Frith. She had resided there during more than half a century. For many

years she met a class in her own house, and was much beloved by those who were favoured with her wise and godly counsel. Her converse and deportment, and zeal, were those of one living near to God. Whatever sorrow of heart her marriage with Mr. Bennet may have caused Mr. Wesley, and even if our Founder had just occasion for complaint, she lived during this long period as a devoted servant of Christ; and on February 23rd, 1803, in her eighty-ninth year, died in great peace. Her death was improved by the Rev. Jabez Bunting, M.A., and a memoir of her life was afterwards published by her son.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXTENSION NOTWITHSTANDING LOSSES.

1805—1807.

AT the Conference of 1805 a third preacher was sent to Macclesfield, William France joining those already there. As there were also two at Congleton, considerable advance must have been made in providing for the more frequent visiting of the preaching-places.

At this time a youth named William Hadfield was apprentice to a druggist in the town. His employer attended Christ-church, where the Rev. Melville Horne had succeeded the Rev. David Simpson. Mr. Horne was, in early life, an Itinerant Methodist preacher; afterwards, a curate with the Rev. John Fletcher, at Madeley; still later, a chaplain at Sierra-Leone. At length he became Incumbent of the new church, Macclesfield. William Hadfield for some time heard Mr. Horne with pleasure, but at length became dissatisfied with some of the doctrines taught by the preacher. He endeavoured to find instruction more to his taste elsewhere, and ultimately went to the Methodist chapel, led thither in all probability by his friend Joshua Thorley.

At that time, and for long afterwards, there was, as previously mentioned, a portion of Sunderland Street

chapel known to the regular attendants as "Nicodemus' corner." It was near the doors, down stairs, and separated from the other part of the floor by a high partition. The seats here were free, and those who occupied them could be seen by very few of those who might be in the other parts of the chapel. Now, Joshua Thorley had no need to frequent the corner, as his employer was a constant worshipper at Sunderland Street, but with William Hadfield it was otherwise. He had to overcome his own prejudices, and then might reasonably expect opposition from his master. He therefore, in the first instance, ventured no further than "Nicodemus' corner," and it seems that his friend Joshua sat with him. William, like his friend, became deeply anxious about his soul: he heard a doctrine which commended itself to his judgment, but he also was aroused concerning his own spiritual condition, and felt the need of fleeing "from the wrath to come," and of being saved from his sins. The youth began to attend the prayer-meeting at five o'clock in the morning; and sometimes sought literally to tread in the very footsteps of a poor old man who went thither: he longed to be as holy and happy as he believed that meanly-clad man was. His employer soon learned the truth concerning his change of views and conduct, and remonstrated. Hadfield was gentle yet firm in his determination to remain among the Methodists; and, eventually his employer withdrew his opposition. Yet the seeker had not found the blessing he desired.

One morning, at the early prayer-meeting, he was asked to pray. He replied, "I cannot, Sir." When he returned to his lodgings he felt humbled at the reply he had been constrained to make. Taking pen and paper he endeavoured to compose a prayer, but failed.

Then he fell on his knees, and besought the Lord to teach him to pray, and to save his soul. That cry was heard; William Hadfield was brought into "the liberty of God's dear children," his mouth being henceforth opened towards God and for God.

Sometime afterwards, he removed to Congleton, where he commenced business on his own account, joining the Methodist Society at once. The Lord prospered the young man. In time, he became one of the leading persons in the town, and was elected Mayor. During many years he held the Commission of the Peace, and, the office of alderman. His worldly store also increased. But, through Divine grace, he was enabled to hold fast his integrity, and to walk humbly with God. On one occasion it so happened that he was the Circuit-steward for Congleton, his friend Thorley at the same time filling the same office for Macclesfield, and that they journeyed in company to the District Meeting. They held sweet intercourse concerning the Lord's goodness to them in former days, and through many years since they sat together in "Nicodemus' corner." Mr. Hadfield survived until 1868. When he died, the towns-people sought to honour his memory by a public funeral. But infinitely better than that distinction was the "abundant entrance" already ministered unto him into the "everlasting kingdom."

On February 23rd, 1807, George Pearson died in great peace, having been spared to enter his eighty-ninth year. During sixty years he was a member of the Methodist Society, and in connection with it maintained an unblemished reputation. During the greater part of this long period he was a Leader, and he had at the time of his decease the charge of two classes. In his important office he earnestly and

lovingly strove to benefit those whose names were on his class-papers. He was also unremitting in his attentions to the sick and poor: as his resources increased he manifested much generosity in relieving the needy. In attendance on all the means of grace he was also most exemplary: he delighted to hear God's Word; and rejoiced in united prayer, in Christian fellowship, and in every ordinance which brought him near to God. He met one of his classes in the last week of his life, when he was scarcely able to leave his bed. The Lord's work was his delight to the end.

This good man's early educational advantages had been few, as we have seen, and it is possible that he might have done more than he did to repair the loss thus occasioned. It does not appear that he was ever able to write his own name. Two crosses only, of very irregular form, were appended by him to the trust-deeds of the first Sunderland Street chapel: one might almost suppose that Mr. Pearson took hold of the pen on that occasion with some scruples of conscience, and was glad to lay down the strange instrument as speedily as possible. Tradition affirms that, when in a position of moderate affluence himself, living in a house he had purchased, and surrounded by descendants and kinsfolk who were disposed to "look up," the old man persisted in wearing a green apron as he had been long accustomed to do. This memento of former employment and business was neither old nor soiled, and was wrapped around his waist, but it was there. The worthy ancient most likely would have felt, had the green apron been taken away, like an old soldier without his uniform and medal.

George Pearson's end was eminently blessed. Suffering little, he was not long confined to his house,

and to his bed only two days. His general answer to friends who enquired concerning his state was, "I have no pain in either body or mind, but am gradually sliding into eternity." No fear concerning his future happiness was allowed to trouble him; for the evidence to his soul of God's favour was bright and uninterrupted; and so a constant peace and holy confidence were manifest in all his words and looks. Thus, after serving God long and faithfully, he died in the Lord.

By his desire, the Rev. Theophilus Lessey took as the text for his funeral sermon, the long-remembered words which had impressed him full sixty years before at Shrigley-Fold:—"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." The great respect entertained for the godly man, who was a poor working-tailor when he became a Methodist, was made apparent by the thousands who crowded to his funeral, and by the immense congregations that listened to the funeral sermons preached in Christchurch and in Sunderland Street chapel.

A somewhat singular circumstance is affirmed to have taken place soon after George Pearson's death. One morning his grandson Samuel, then living with his uncle, entered the room at breakfast-time with an unusually solemn aspect and demeanour. As he was generally very full of spirits, and disposed to be jocose, this was observed, and he was questioned, especially by the young ladies his cousins, as to the cause. "Cause enough," the young man replied, "I've seen my grandfather." "Nonsense," those present said; "you mean that you've been dreaming about him. That is not to be wondered at." "Awake or dreaming," said Mr. Samuel, "I have both seen and heard him." His cousins eagerly asked, "What did he say to you?"

Samuel replied, "You do not believe me. But one thing he said to me can be tested. *That* I'll tell you. As grandfather stood by my bed-side he said, among other things, 'Samuel, in my top-coat pocket, you will find my class-paper, and you will find so much money, (mentioning the sum.) Take it to Thomas Smallwood.' One of you find the coat and see whether I'm right." Mr. Smallwood, who had married George Pearson's daughter Martha, was Society-steward at the time. Those who knew where the deceased's clothes were, went, and found the class-paper and also the exact sum of money named. Samuel lived long, and acquired much wealth.

On June 16th, 1808, John Ryle, Esq., formerly mentioned as having been Mayor of Macclesfield, a generous supporter of the cause of God, and benefactor of the needy, entered into the "everlasting habitations," whither he had been preceded by many whom he had aided. A few years before his death he gave a thousand pounds towards the erection of Sunderland Street chapel: in those days, when money was dearer, and large fortunes rarer, than at present, such a donation was regarded as remarkable. There is, however, sufficient reason to believe that Mr. Ryle was more indebted to Methodism than Methodism was to him.

We have slightly anticipated the course of events in order to compare two good men. Mr. Ryle was not spared to such old age as his co-trustee and friend, George Pearson. He was but sixty-three when summoned to the heavenly rest. But he left behind him some who have been made a blessing to society. Especially has one grandson, an estimable clergyman of the Established Church, promoted the cause of Christ both by his voice and pen.

In the "Minutes" of 1807, in answer to the question:—"What Chapels are now building, or to be built this year?" the reply concerning Macclesfield is, "One at *Rainow*, one at *Bollington*, and one at *Sithington*." The last name is apparently a misprint for "*Withington*." The preachers in Conference assembled must have had considerable confidence that the Macclesfield Circuit was quite capable of providing for its own needs. The question is asked as usual at that time:—"What collections are to be made for chapels the ensuing year?" For Darwen, a collection was authorized throughout the Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Blackburn, Lancaster, and Leigh Circuits. On behalf of Congleton, a collection was to be made throughout Congleton, Chester, and Northwich Circuits. In similar manner several Circuits were to receive help from their neighbours. For Rainow and Bollington collections were to be made "in the Macclesfield Circuit." It was scarcely necessary that the Conference should have recorded its formal permission for the friends to assist themselves.

It is instructive to observe that while the Macclesfield Methodists, without help from others, were building three chapels, and at the same time supporting the same number of preachers as they had four years previously, when Congleton and villages adjacent were included in the Circuit, they were blessed by God in an unusual manner. The year 1807–8 was one of remarkable prosperity. The Lord was certainly removing some from among them who had "seemed to be pillars," but he converted and added many to the Church. There was an addition to the members in the Circuit of nearly four hundred. This reminds us of the words of the prophet: "Consider now from this day and upward, from the four-and-twentieth day of the ninth month, even

from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it. . . . From this day will I bless you." (Haggai ii. 18, 19.)

It may be an advantage here to furnish the reader with some extracts from the

"METHODIST PREACHERS' PLAN FOR THE MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT, 1807.

'For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."—2 Cor. iv. 5.

Preachers' Names.	"Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James i. 22.)			
	No.	Places.	Hours.	
Samuel Taylor.	1	Macclesfield	8	6
Theophilus Lessey.	2	Knutsford	2	6
J. D. Burton.	3	Kettleshulme, or Chinley, Chapel and Buxton	10	1½ 6½
James Lean.				
Thomas Allen.	4	Shrigley, Lima, and Bollington	9	12½ 4
John Goddard.	5	Kettleshulme	1	4
George Brocklehurst.	6	Lima and Bollington	12½	4
John Birchenall.	7	Hooley-hay and Rainow	1	4
William Boothby.	8	Shrigley and Booth Green	9	1
Robert Walker.	9	Coppice edge and Langley	10	2
Robert Marshall.	10	Bosley		3
George Whitehead.	11	Gawsworth and Broken Cross	4	7
Francis Swindells.	12	Prestbury	4½	
John Goodfellow.	13	Lindow	2	
Benjamin Turnock.	14	Peover	2	
Thomas Pearson.	15	Siddington	11	
Peter Bradburn.	16	Whaley		4
— Musket.	17	Chinley and four lane ends	9	4
— Ashley.	18	Flat and Dove-holes	10	4
— Walton.	19	Sparrow-pit and Peak Forest	1	3½
	20	Bagshaw		4
	21	Edale	9	1
	22	Kettleshulme		4

Quarterly Meetings at Macclesfield June 29th and October 5th. Local-preachers' at 10

Places.	Love-Feasts.			Hours.
Macclesfield	June 28.	October 4	at	2
Knutsford	May 24.	Sept. 13		1
Buxton	May 17.	Sept. 13		1½
Chapel-en-le-Frith	July 19.	Oct. 11		12½
Chinley	May 24			9
Kettleshulme	May 31.			12½
Lima	May 17.	September 6		12½

In the extracts here given from the Circuit-plan for 1807, it is observable that Knutsford stands as the

In the "Minutes" of 1807, in answer to the question:—"What Chapels are now building, or to be built this year?" the reply concerning Macclesfield is, "One at *Rainow*, one at *Bollington*, and one at *Sithington*." The last name is apparently a misprint for "*Withington*." The preachers in Conference assembled must have had considerable confidence that the Macclesfield Circuit was quite capable of providing for its own needs. The question is asked as usual at that time:—"What collections are to be made for chapels the ensuing year?" For Darwen, a collection was authorized throughout the Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Blackburn, Lancaster, and Leigh Circuits. On behalf of Congleton, a collection was to be made throughout Congleton, Chester, and Northwich Circuits. In similar manner several Circuits were to receive help from their neighbours. For Rainow and Bollington collections were to be made "in the Macclesfield Circuit." It was scarcely necessary that the Conference should have recorded its formal permission for the friends to assist themselves.

It is instructive to observe that while the Macclesfield Methodists, without help from others, were building three chapels, and at the same time supporting the same number of preachers as they had four years previously, when Congleton and villages adjacent were included in the Circuit, they were blessed by God in an unusual manner. The year 1807–8 was one of remarkable prosperity. The Lord was certainly removing some from among them who had "seemed to be pillars," but he converted and added many to the Church. There was an addition to the members in the Circuit of nearly four hundred. This reminds us of the words of the prophet: "Consider now from this day and upward, from the four-and-twentieth day of the ninth month, even

from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it. . . . From this day will I bless you." (Haggai ii. 18, 19.)

It may be an advantage here to furnish the reader with some extracts from the

"METHODIST PREACHERS' PLAN FOR THE MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT, 1807.

'For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."—2 Cor. iv. 5.

Preachers' Names.	"Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James i. 22.)			
	No.	Places.	Hours.	
Samuel Taylor.	1	Macclesfield	8	6
Theophilus Lessey.	2	Knutsford	2	6
J. D. Burton.	3	Kettleshulme, or Chinley, Chapel and Buxton	10	1½ 6½
James Lean.	4	Shrigley, Lima, and Bollington	9	12½ 4
Thomas Allen.	5	Kettleshulme		1 4
John Goddard.	6	Lima and Bollington		12½ 4
George Brocklehurst.	7	Hooley-hay and Rainow		1 4
John Birchenall.	8	Shrigley and Booth Green	9	1
William Boothby.	9	Coppice edge and Langley	10	2
Robert Walker.	10	Bosley		3
Robert Marshall.	11	Gawsworth and Broken Cross		4 7
George Whitehead.	12	Prestbury		4½
Francis Swindells.	13	Lindow		2
John Goodfellow.	14	Peover		2
Benjamin Turnock.	15	Siddington	11	
Thomas Pearson.	16	Whaley		4
Peter Bradburn.	17	Chinley and four lane ends	9	4
— Musket.	18	Flat and Dove-holes	10	4
— Ashley.	19	Sparrow-pit and Peak Forest		1 3½
— Walton.	20	Bagshaw		4
	21	Edale	9	1
	22	Kettleshulme		4
		Quarterly Meetings at Macclesfield June 29th and October 5th. Local-preachers' at 10		

Places.	Love-Feasts.	Hours.
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Chinley	May 24	9
Kettleshulme	May 31.	12½
Lima	May 17. September 6	12½

In the extracts here given from the Circuit-plan for 1807, it is observable that Knutsford stands as the

second place in order. Now in the plan for 1803 there is no reference to Knutsford, nor is there in plans of still earlier date. The fact is that in Circuit arrangements there had been an accession of Knutsford to the Macclesfield Circuit. This was a very unusual circumstance. Macclesfield Circuit had, like many others, covered such an immense area, that all concerned were, no doubt, inclined to curtail its dimensions, if this could be done without injury to the work of God, rather than enlarge them. But in this instance it was deemed advantageous to receive Knutsford into the Circuit; and the place assigned to it on the plan showed that it had already become somewhat important. It had long been a portion of the Northwich Circuit, but henceforth, during more than half a century, it was to be associated with Macclesfield.

The Rev. John Wesley visited Knutsford in March, 1738. This was two months before that ever-memorable evening of which he records:—"I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." On the way from Manchester to Knutsford, he writes, "We were fully determined to lose no opportunity of awakening, instructing, or exhorting, any whom we might meet with in our journey. At Knutsford, where we first stopped, all we spoke to thankfully received the word of exhortation."

In April 1775 Mr. Wesley preached at Knutsford,

and was favourably impressed by the conduct of the people who crowded to hear him. Four days previously he had visited Newcastle-under-Lyme, and recorded:—"In the evening, though it was cold, I was obliged to preach abroad. One buffoon laboured much to interrupt. But as he was bawling, with his mouth wide open, some arch boys gave him such a mouthful of dirt as quite satisfied him." No such attempted interruption occurred at Knutsford. Mr. Wesley wrote:—"The house would by no means contain the congregation. The street too was filled; and even those which could not hear were silent. This is uncommon; especially in a town little accustomed to this strange way of preaching: those who cannot hear themselves usually taking care to hinder others from hearing."

We are not in this instance to understand Mr. Wesley as referring to a *chapel* by the expression "the house." Sometimes he did employ that term to designate a chapel erected for the worship of God, and entirely set apart for sacred purposes. But the Methodists of Knutsford were not privileged at that time, nor for twenty years afterwards, to worship in such a sanctuary.

The conference of 1794 appointed the Rev. George Lowe Superintendent of the Northwich Circuit. Mr. Lowe had toiled with distinguished zeal and success in the Macclesfield Circuit, as a local-preacher, at a very early date. During the two years immediately preceding his appointment as Assistant at Northwich, he had travelled in the Macclesfield Circuit, without the responsibility of Superintendency. Mr. Lowe remained two years at Northwich. During the former he had James Watson, and during the latter Miles Martindale as his colleague. The Circuit, like most others of that

day, was very wide, and was in feeble condition. Many names were found on the class-papers representing persons who had long ceased to meet in class, and who contributed neither money nor work for the furtherance of God's cause; and the result of a careful scrutiny was, that a considerable number of such names, after due examination into each case, was removed from the registers.

Much ill-feeling was for a season excited by this exercise of godly discipline. But the preachers found that the true-hearted gathered around them the more closely, and both preachers and people gave themselves afresh to prayer and earnest toil. Much good was effected throughout the Circuit, but this was especially the case at Knutsford. The congregations there were greatly enlarged. Persons were convinced of sin under almost every sermon. In many instances their distress was so great that they sought mercy with loud cries and many tears. Being pardoned and made happy in Jesus, they published abroad what great things the Lord had done for them. And thus, through the power and mercy of God, some of the most vile and wretched sinners in the place were saved, so that public attention was generally aroused.

The Methodists of Knutsford were at this time worshipping in a room belonging to one Peter Dean. It was the best accommodation they could secure, and they were doubtless thankful to Peter that he allowed them the use of it. But it was not now anything like large enough for the congregation, and not very convenient even for the Society. Having increased both in numbers and piety, the Methodists resolved that they would build a place of worship, and that it should be both commodious and respectable. The

members of the Society contributed liberally, according to their means, and then set to work among their acquaintances in the town, soliciting their help. Mr. Lowe was sent on a mission to Chester, and Mr. Martindale to Liverpool, to beg among the Methodists in those places. They returned greatly encouraged, having, as they reported, been received kindly and aided generously. From Chester and Liverpool they brought £53 13s. When this sum was added to what had previously been raised in Knutsford, the people felt convinced that they were in a position "to arise and build." Larger chapels, in more pretentious places, and at a somewhat later date have been commenced, alas! without the manifestation of any such previous liberality and effort.

The promoters of this enterprise, and especially that noble-minded man Peter Dean, were to be sorely tested in reference to this chapel. As was needful, every Methodist was expected to do what he could to save expense, and to help forward the godly undertaking. Peter Dean was in the front, as usual. His kitchen was large, and he lent it, that the doors and windows of the new building might be therein prepared. This was, in some way, deemed an economical arrangement. Alas, for the project! One evening, after the carpenters had left off work, a child of Peter's entered the kitchen with a lighted candle. There was a large quantity of shavings near the door. The child through carelessness set fire to these, and the place was speedily in flames. Alarm was given, and strenuous exertions to quench the fire were made. Through a gracious Providence, the calamity was somewhat limited. The walls of the house, and, what was regarded as more remarkable, the roof were saved; but the interior of the building, and the wood-work intended for the

chapel, were entirely destroyed. To the Knutsford Methodists, and still more to Peter Dean, the loss was very great.

Some of Peter's acquaintances hoped that this catastrophe would result in his abandoning Methodism. They regarded the mischance as a marked interposition of Providence intended to check the progress of fanaticism in the town. Mr. Dean was repeatedly told that his adherence to the cause he had espoused would prove his ruin. He was asked to consider what had hitherto been the result of his misguided enthusiasm. If he had no regard for his own prosperity, would he not take pity on his children? He had now during several years contributed money to this sect, opened his premises for their use, entertained the preachers, devoted his time to the spread of these new views,—and he was approaching beggary. Though thus appealed to, Mr. Dean was unmoved. He fully believed that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Meanwhile the Preachers, and the Methodists of Knutsford, met together to consult what they must do. One thing was clear,—they needed direction and aid from God. Even before the disaster, their difficulties had seemed sufficiently numerous. So they pleaded that the Lord would graciously interpose in their behalf. Then two other things appeared clear to them. They must without delay resume the preparations for the chapel, and they must help Peter Dean to repair his dwelling. So, they concluded, there must be more generous giving, and hard begging, and firm reliance on Divine aid. Before such a spirit difficulties rapidly vanished. No further misfortune happened to them in

completing the house of prayer, and in due time it was consecrated to Almighty God.

The Lord has in many instances given marked tokens of His approval to those who have generously and laboriously sought the extension of His work. The erection of a house of prayer may be a most religious work, and all the details connected with such an undertaking may be done as unto God. There is a fragrance well-pleasing to the King of kings in the loving service and grateful self-denial thus manifested. Showers of blessing have speedily followed such evidence of loyalty to God and His cause in the earth. So it was in Knutsford. While the disciples were earnestly collecting and giving money for the chapel, their Divine Master sent down on them, on their children, and neighbours, the richer blessings of His grace. Knutsford, instead of being a burden to the Northwich Circuit, become one of its most flourishing places, and, when it was deemed advisable that it should be transferred, at once took an honourable position in the Macclesfield Circuit.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIRST BOLLINGTON CHAPEL.—1807.

DURING the summer of 1807, preparations were made by the Methodists of the Macclesfield Circuit for the erection of a chapel at Bollington. Hitherto no building had ever been provided in that place for the worship of God. What religious services had been held, had been conducted in private dwellings, or in some part of a structure originally designed for secular purposes, and liable again to be so used. But the Methodists now purposed to build a house of God. Since that time, places of worship have been raised in the village by the Episcopalians, the Romanists, the Congregationalists, the "Primitives," and others. But, as in many other places wherein Methodists are sometimes looked upon now as intruders by narrow-minded sectarians, they were the first to stem the utter worldliness around, by raising at their own cost a house of prayer. They thus both stimulated and aided similar efforts of other Churches made at subsequent periods.

There is no sufficient evidence that our venerated Founder ever stayed in Bollington or preached there, or even passed through it; or so much as knew that there was a village near Macclesfield which took its

name from the stream, the Bollin, which pursued its course among the grand hills and beautiful vales of that neighbourhood. He thought highly of the work of God in Macclesfield, and even compared it favourably with what he saw in connection with City Road and Oldham Street. But he could not forecast how largely the great enterprise which he was directing would in after years be sustained by Methodists in the locality of which we are speaking. Those who entered into his labours, after he had reached the heavenly rest, would inherit many advantages. While taking hold of his declaration, "The world is my parish," they would have resources and facilities for exemplifying the purport of that saying, such as the author of it never possessed. They would be enabled to send messengers of the churches to the most distant and benighted parts of the earth to proclaim "the unsearchable riches of Christ." In sustaining the glorious enterprise of Foreign Missions, the Methodists assembling in City Road chapel would take a considerable part, and so would those of Oldham Street; and in like manner would those of Sunderland Street be engaged. But, during many years, more money has been raised for the evangelization of the heathen by those worshipping in the village chapel at Bollington, than by any of the other congregations just specified. Mr. Wesley could scarcely have anticipated this, if even he had caught a glimpse of the hamlet nestling among the hills, or had heard its name. Those who sow the good seed in the morning, and in the evening withhold not their hand, cannot estimate the indirect and unforeseen, yet gracious, results of their loving toil.

Edward Clayton appears to have had the privilege and honour of first receiving in this place the ark into

his house. A class-meeting was formed here at an early period of Methodist history. The dwelling was generally known as "the old Glass-house," and stood near the place where the canal aqueduct now crosses the road to Shrigley, and so at no great distance from the site on which eventually a chapel was erected. Edward was born in November 1739, about the time when the first class-meeting was commenced. While a young man he was married to one who proved a true help-mate. Grace Clayton gained the esteem of many, and was justly prized and loved by her husband. On the occasion of their marriage, Edward's father presented to the happy pair a family Bible, which had already seen some use. It was, however, very strongly bound, and, though much read, proved an enduring heir-loom. In future years it became the property of their son Ralph, who was "mighty in the Scriptures," and who daily read in it. Ralph Clayton left it to his daughter Grace, who also read therein constantly; yet was the old Bible complete a century and a quarter after it was first purchased, and it is still prized.

Edward was not a rich man, yet in a respectable position. He dwelt in his own house, and cultivated his own land. His dairy farm was, however, small, and his proper trade was that of a tailor. Now, notwithstanding he had been taught to read the Bible and go to the church, though distant, he had not very strict notions concerning religion. The churchyard was a convenient place for meeting with customers; and, after Divine service, it was usual at Prestbury, as in many other places, to receive orders and directions, and even interchange bundles and money. But the stir which was about this time made in the country concerning religion fortunately reached the ears of Edward

and Grace Clayton. They, like many of their neighbours, were attracted to hear those "itinerant" preachers. In their case, happily, curiosity led to the surrender of their hearts to God; and henceforth they helped each other in the way to heaven as they had previously done in tasks of an earthly kind.

When Edward Clayton first joined the Methodists he regularly went to Stockport to hear the preachers there. There was a two-fold cause for his selecting so distant a place. One reason was that there the visits of the preachers were more regular than in smaller places. But a second was that he might be freed from the importunities of customers: he was fully resolved that he would do no more trading on the Lord's day. Those who employed him, and who lived at a distance from "the old Glass-house," were still desirous of using the leisure of Sunday for arrangements concerning their clothes. Hence, though Edward's resolution was firm, he was liable to much annoyance if he was at home, or in any way accessible, on the Sabbath. George Shore, of Adlington, who gave a penny towards City Road chapel, was his most intimate friend, and accompanied him to Stockport. In one year the two companions walked thither on each of fifty Sabbaths. Edward thus trudged more than a thousand miles in twelve months, that he might listen to the Word of life. Mr. Wesley was not greatly encouraged by what he witnessed in Stockport, and spoke of it as "poor, dull, dead." But, if the fire burned somewhat dimly in the town for a season, certainly George and Edward there renewed their torches weekly, torches which shone during the other days of the week in Adlington and Bollington.

After some time Edward found that he might profitably worship nearer home, and where Grace could

accompany him. His customers had come, at length, to fully understand that his purpose was inflexible. There were edifying ministrations in Christ-church and Sunderland Street chapel in Macclesfield, not to speak of warm-hearted services at Kettleshulme and Billinge; and, in his own dwelling, the people of God began to assemble for Christian fellowship, mutual help, and united prayer. So came the first class-meeting at Bollington to be formed at the "old Glass-house."

Elias Lomas, the tanner, was the first to provide a room in which public worship could be conducted by the Methodists. His tannery and bark-house occupied the site now covered by the residence and beautiful gardens known as "Brook House." Mr. Lomas's trade reminds us that St. Peter, at the time he was about to be honoured by being permitted to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, was found lodging in the house of "Simon the tanner." Elias Lomas must have been a man known and esteemed beyond the precincts of his own village; for when, in 1781, trustees had to be selected for the new chapel in Macclesfield, he was requested, as we have seen, to accept that position of responsibility. In a large room on his premises was a huge wheel, used in grinding the bark for the tannery; and over this was a room, which the worthy man contrived to spare from business purposes, and devote to the worship of God. Access to this chamber was gained by steps outside the bark-house, and hither, during several years, the Methodists directed their steps at the hour of prayer, thankful that they were so well off, through the providence of God and the kindness of their prosperous neighbour. At the time the bark-house ceased to be the Methodists' chapel, an Itinerant preacher was appointed to preach once a fortnight at

Shrigley, at nine o'clock in the forenoon, at Lima at half-past twelve, and at Bollington at four in the afternoon. On the alternate Sabbath a local preacher was appointed to Lima at half-past twelve, and to Bollington at four. The love-feast for the neighbourhood was to be held at Lima, in May and September, at half-past twelve o'clock.

Mr. Peter Lomas then dwelt in a house known as the "Water House."* The residence has been entirely rebuilt, and the grounds have been laid out in a manner which would have surprised its occupant of eighty years ago. The name is still retained. Mr. Peter Lomas had entered on the manufacture of cotton to an extent which then seemed large, and which indicated the energy of his character. He and his wife were among the first to welcome the Methodist preachers to their home, and they continued, during many years, to extend a generous hospitality to the messengers of Christ when visiting the village. He was a native of Bollington, spent his days there, and was deeply interested in the welfare of the residents. In early life he united himself to the Methodists, and continued among them to the day of his death.

Of Mr. Lomas's daughter and her descendants more may afterwards be said. Two of his sons, Peter and John, died unmarried. Another son, Thomas, in due time took an active part in the management of the cotton-mill. A remark of this Thomas, remembered half a century afterwards by him to whom it was addressed, illustrates the homelier life of former days, and suggests that perhaps the relation between the

* The father of Elias and Peter Lomas had occupied the "Water House," had died there in 1760, and was buried in Prestbury churchyard.

employer and employed was more intimate then than now. Mr. Thomas was an "overlooker," as well as joint proprietor with his father. He had also thoroughly learned what it was now his business to teach. Addressing a little lad who was employed as a "piecer," he said:—"Billy, I'll strive thee which can piece fastest. There's one; there's two; there's three! and, Billy, thou hasn't pieced one." Then Mr. Thomas went his way, leaving the lad to reflect how it was that "Master Thomas" could thus excel him. Possibly the youngster looked somewhat disconsolate. One of the "hands" however suggested a cheering thought. There was one part of the task in which the little fellow could excel his master. Mr. Thomas was somewhat stout, and not very adapted for stooping. Part of the lad's business was to creep beneath the work in order to remove dust and dirt, and he was agile in doing this. So the man said to him, "Billy, if Master Thomas offers to strive thee again, tell him, 'I can wipe down.'"

We may suppose that as Mr. Thomas Lomas spoke in this way, his father was a plain man. But certainly he was a man of energy, ability, and worth. He had also succeeded in business. When, therefore, the time came for the erection of a Methodist chapel in his native village, he was in a position to help forward the scheme considerably. He had suitable land, a field called "Knowles Green," and it was eventually decided that on part of it a house for God should be raised.

In a glance, however, at Methodist names in Bollington at this time there is one which must not be omitted. Two or three of the other principal men who were "in Society" will occur in the list of trustees. But there was a woman who, although in domestic service, began

to be regarded as "a mother in Israel." She was familiarly and lovingly designated "Molly" Ward. During about sixty years she served in the family of Peter Lomas and his kin. Mary was a servant faithful in all things to her earthly employers, and devoted to the Lord Jesus. Her voice was often heard in prayer and praise. In the class-meeting and band-meeting she generally had something to say that would exalt her Divine Master, and edify those who assembled with her for worship. Long was she thus permitted to honour the Saviour. When more than ninety years of age she could testify of the goodness and faithfulness of her covenant-keeping God, and at length in her ninety-fourth year, without experiencing the pains of dying, she was caught away to the raptures of the glorified. She was one of those who had long worshipped in the room over the bark-mill, and who were delighted at the prospect of having a sanctuary of their own.

The land described as part of the field known as Knowles Green, bounded southwardly by the road leading to Pott Shrigley, was not absolutely freehold. But Mr. Peter Lomas was not content to secure it for its sacred purpose for nine hundred and ninety-nine years, as is not uncommonly done for ordinary objects. That might have been thought sufficient, even by a shrewd man like himself, if he had been about to build a cotton-mill or a mansion for his own use. But a house was about to be raised for God. So in the trust-deed it was stipulated that a chapel should be erected in the space of one year, and that the land should be held in trust for the sacred purpose to which it was now devoted during the term of "nine thousand, nine hundred, and ninety-nine years." No one need be very solicitous concerning what shall happen to it *afterwards*.

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By a deed dated January 9th, 1808, and enrolled on March 7th, 1808, the estate was vested in nine trustees, whose names ought to be recorded as of men able and willing to take on themselves such responsibility, and deemed suitable by their brethren. They were—

LAWRENCE PLANT WAGSTAFFE, of Bollington, Cotton Manufacturer;
THOMAS ROGERS, of Bollington, Cotton Manufacturer;
JOHN HOLLAND, of Bollington, Yeoman;
JAMES BRADLEY, of Sutton, Silk Manufacturer;
THOMAS PALFREYMAN, of Macclesfield, Silk [illegible] turer;
SAMUEL LOWNDES, of Macclesfield, Ironmonger;
JOHN BIRCHINALL, of Hurdsfield, Cotton Manufacturer;
THOMAS ALLEN, the younger, of Macclesfield, Dyer;
JOHN HOLBROOK, of Butley, Yeoman.

It is observable in this list of nine that the name of Peter Lomas does not occur. It might be suggested that this was because he had been the vendor, or donor, of the land. But that was not the sole reason, for we find that in the first instance the land was transferred, by deed bearing date July 21st, 1807, "by Peter Lomas, of Bollington," Gentleman, to James Daniel Burton, Gentleman; and by the latter transferred at a later date to trustees of whom Mr. Lomas might have been one. Possibly one cause of the omission of his name was that he was somewhat advanced in life. Yet this could scarcely have been the sole reason of the omission as he had not reached threescore. It is not unlikely that he recollected what had happened at the building of the chapel on Billinge Brow, and that Mr. Peter Lomas knowing his position of influence among the Methodists of Bollington, did not wish to have even the appearance

of retaining any lordship over the soil. Residents in the village may be curious concerning little things, and may ask who this James Daniel Burton, Gentleman, was, in whom, during half a year, the land was vested without any trust-deed to control him. Confidence must have been placed in him that he would not abuse the power with which he was thus intrusted. Who was he? We find him where we should scarcely have expected. He was "the young preacher." Nor, though styled on the parchment, "Gent.," was he [illegible] Itinerant ministry. He had only begun to age she c[illegible]05, and "died in the work" in 1817. Mr. her coven[illegible]ade his sons in the Gospel to "affect the ge[illegible]urth y[illegible];" yet was it well said a few years since by one who had occupied the Presidential chair, "I trust that the time will never come when Methodist preachers shall cease to be, in the highest sense, gentlemen." Still, Mr. Burton would be surprised at the title given to him, while pleased by the confidence reposed in him.

While preparation was being made for the erection of a chapel on Knowles Green, Bollington, arrangements were proceeding to build another at Rainow. Indeed these two years, from the Conference of 1806 to that of 1808, were marked by special enlargement throughout the Macclesfield Circuit. When all losses by removals, and deaths, and backsliding, had been made up, there was a [illegible]ear increase in the Societies of more than five hund[illegible] members. The Rev. Samuel Taylor, the seco[illegible]or that name in the Methodist ministry, and the Rev. Theophilus Lessey, the first Methodist preacher of that name, were elsewhere honoured by God, but, perhaps neither of them ever witnessed such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as was given during their residence at Macclesfield with Mr. Burton, and,

during the second year with Mr. Hanwell, as the junior colleague.

Yet it was about this time that near to Bollington, and among those who would worship in the new chapel when erected there, persecution had to be endured. As the early Christians suffered severely in some instances during the reign of Emperors in many respect excellent, so the few Methodists at Shrigley had to encounter much opposition from one who was undoubtedly striving to act a worthy part. The narrative is not uninstructive. The estate at Shrigley had been, during several generations, held by one family. The representative of this family at the close of the eighteenth century was Edward Downes, generally spoken of as "Squire" Downes. He was a man of great energy, of sterling integrity, and of vigorous mind; and, we may add, of undoubted conscientiousness. Yet there were in him two weaknesses of judgment, or two aspects of one weakness; one of which eventually led to such financial embarassment that he had to sell his lands, and it was believed by some that he died a heart-broken man; and the other led him long and fiercely to oppose the Methodists living on the estate. Squire Downes' error, —a not uncommon one,—was the forming an opinion on an incomplete induction of facts, and then acting on that opinion with an indomitable perseverance. Yet those who suffered by his self-will could not fail to perceive much in him that was praiseworthy.

As we have said, the Shrigley estate, so long held by the Downes family, had at last to be sold, and strangers took up their abode at the Hall. This was not because the last Squire was given to gambling, or frequented the race-course, or was devoted to hunting,

or drank to excess. It was supposed by men of business who regretted Edward Downes' misfortune, that his money had been chiefly expended in forming roads, and building walls, and making other improvements which were certainly desirable, yet which ruined the projector. Having formed his opinion, however, the Squire was not the man to be diverted from his course.

Now Edward Downes worshipped in the ancient church, built on the estate in time immemorial. There his ancestors had bowed before God. Possibly some of these had done so while a Romanist priest had celebrated mass, and others of them while a Presbyterian minister had preached and prayed without book; but they had kept to the old building, and so there had been no schism. Squire Downes still occupied the family pew, and believed it right so to do. He also believed it proper that his tenantry and neighbours should thus far tread in the steps of their forefathers. At any rate, if a new religion should prove necessary, they ought, before making any change, to wait for the sign from him. He only in Shrigley was in a position to form new roads; and why should poor people be introducing novelties in theology and worship? He let his mind be fully known in this matter, but was mortified to learn that his will was not obeyed, and that he could not enforce it. One John Unwin had, somehow, acquired a right to the cottage in which he dwelt, The site has since been included in the enlarged park, and the lowly dwelling pulled down. Then it stood unenclosed, and was John Unwin's property, and also a Methodist "conventicle." It is a little remarkable that the house in which the Methodists afterwards, for a time, assembled in Shrigley, was eventually pulled down that the site should be enclosed

in the enlarged churchyard. But Squire Downes had to do with John Unwin's "castle," and found that the occupant could not be expelled by legal assault, nor starved into submission, nor frightened into surrender. This was annoying in the extreme.

Let it be recorded to the credit of Mr. Downes that he was strenously opposed to all lounging and tippling in ale-houses during church hours. He employed very active measures to prevent those under his control from thus wasting their time and money. In fact he set his face against drunkeness and profanity, and vice in general, at any time, in the neighbourhood. He desired that the Shrigley estate should be a model in every way. To those who submitted to his guidance he was generous. For any child in the little village, who seemed to be fitted for something higher than manual labour, he would assist in gaining the needful education. Indeed, his closing hours were cheered by the presence and counsel of one whom he had thus aided in entering the ministry of the Episcopal Church. In all respects, however, he regarded it as the Squire's place to judge and arrange concerning good roads. Others should be thankful for such roads, as they daily walked therein.

Mr. Downes found more trouble with the Methodist preaching-house than with the ale-house of the village. In the tavern, at any rate, no loud song-singing, nor open door, could be observed at hours forbidden by himself. But, though the Methodists had no service during church hours, and were generally present then at church, yet, early in the morning, at noon and in the evening, they were singing, praying, and preaching in their own way, and that often a very noisy way. Even some of the Squire's tenants were known to be ring-leaders of the sect.

On one occasion he cited some of the most prominent among the Shrigley Methodists to appear before the magistrates. These authorities of the law were, however, perplexed. They were well acquainted with Squire Downes, and highly-respected him, and would willingly have gratified him. But they could not legally punish the accused, nor even interdict their meetings in future. No breach of the peace had been proved against them, and the case was therefore dismissed. Mr. Downes had expenses to pay, and the most timid among the Methodists now perceived that English law would protect them while worshipping God.

Driven to desperation, the Squire adopted a course which doubtless occasioned him regret on the morrow, and much shame and sorrow before he died. One Sunday evening, in September, while the Methodists were assembled for worship, Mr. Downes repaired to the place. He opened the door, and commanded those present to disperse. They were at the time engaged in prayer, and, though most likely many trembled at the sound of the well-known voice, no one obeyed. When they rose from their knees, one of the boldest among the disciples said, "Don't be frightened; set out a verse of a hymn, and let us sing a bit." Peter Beard was giving out a verse accordingly, when the Squire, intensely mortified, sprang forward and seized Peter by the throat. Peter was however immoveable, and so the Squire relaxed his hold. He then endeavoured to pull a young woman out of the room, as a beginning. He did not succeed even in this. She could not hold her ground as firmly as Peter, but she did not leave the room. Afterwards, as though ashamed of yielding to the Squire's violence, though involuntarily,

she affirmed to her fellow-disciples, apologetically, "I went not a step further than the Squire dragged me."

Mr. Downes was not a man who would easily be beaten. He had made up his mind that for once this irregular gathering should be broken up, and he persisted in his endeavours. He directed one of his men-servants, who had accompanied him, to return to the village and summon the constables to their aid, and to hasten to the Hall, and bring thence the large mastiff. Being impatient to get the Methodists dislodged, he ordered the messenger to mount his pony and "ride with all his might." When the constables and dog arrived, the Squire, now too much infuriated to anticipate possible consequences, ordered the dog into the midst of the little company, encouraging him by words, and hissing, and gestures, to lay hold of some of them. The dog was both savage in its nature and accustomed to obey his master. So it plunged headlong among the poor Methodists with howl and open mouth, and seized a young woman, named Mary Rylands, by the arm. But the mastiff did not inflict the slightest injury on Mary. Possibly it was in the first instance terrified by the unusual sound of singing. Most likely it had never heard such vocal music before. At any rate the dog speedily left hold of Mary Ryland's arm, and rushed out of the place, refusing to enter it again. As the constables did not clearly see what more could be safely done, Squire Downes mounted his pony, and the whole party of invaders retired, leaving Peter Beard and his friends to praise the Lord for His goodness, and to pray for the conversion of their persecutors.

An efficient adviser and helper was raised up for the Shrigley Methodists in Mr. John Clulow, who was ever ready to do battle for the religion of his mother, the

religion in which he hoped some day to find his own true blessedness. When it seemed not impossible that such claims might be made to John Unwin's cottage as would, when maintained by such a man as Squire Downes, prove embarassing, Mr. Clulow, then a leading solicitor in Macclesfield, and also town-clerk, succeeded in renting a tenement in the neighbourhood of Shrigley, had it duly certified for public worship, and so placed under the protection of the law. He then wrote to Mr. Downes requiring him henceforth not to molest, intimidate, or in any other manner annoy, "the people called Methodists" when engaged in worshipping God. In the very emphatic manner which he so well knew how to employ, he warned the Squire of the consequences which would follow the slightest infringement of the counsels thus given to him, and also reminded him that it was only through the clemency of these kind-hearted folk, and on condition of his future good behaviour, that the past would be overlooked. Though intensely mortified, and as yet unchanged in disposition, Mr. Downes saw that further assaults would only result in his own shame and hurt. He therefore satisfied himself by expelling from his houses those who were known to be tainted with Methodism. It is recorded that twenty cottages, once occupied by Methodists, were speedily pulled down. This, however, in all probability was the result of that extreme desire for improving the estate which impoverished the Squire, and eventually led to his misfortunes. The Methodists' preaching-room was henceforth unmolested.

It is satisfactory to know that Squire Downes was, in the end, convinced that the Methodist people in Shrigley were among the best tenants and neighbours he had. At a time when troubles were multiplying

around him, he went to the class-leader whom he had previously endeavoured to terrify or to cajole, so that he might be induced to cease in his efforts to do good, and expressed his regret that he had occasioned him and the Methodists generally so much annoyance; assured him that he had done it in utter ignorance of what Methodist doctrine and practice were; and entreated his forgiveness. After the old family estate had been sold, and Edward Downes was sick unto death, he was visited, as we have said, by a clergyman whom he had greatly befriended in his early days. When that youthful minister said:—"Mr. Downes, you have entered the valley," the dying man, with hopefulness in his countenance and tone, repeated the declaration of the Psalmist, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." A Methodist had been constantly in that sick-room—a maid-servant who had been long in the family, and whose worth had been at length fully seen. She had been honoured of God by being allowed to assist in leading her master nearer to Christ,—so near to Him that death was divested of its sting and terror.

It was in the year 1819 that Edward Downes peacefully entered the eternal rest. But in 1807, while yet, as the Squire of Shrigley, he was doing his utmost to repress intemperance, profanity, and Methodism, the followers of Wesley in the Macclesfield Circuit had witnessed glorious triumphs of grace, and the little chapel on Billinge Brow was to be superseded by two larger chapels, the one at Bollington, and the other at Rainow. Thus, at the very time that the ancient family estate was slipping from the grasp of Edward, the latest Squire of his race, an estate at Rainow—small

indeed, but real and substantial, was vested in trustees for the Methodists, and another at Bollington was secured to Methodism for "nine thousand, nine hundred, and ninety-nine years."

The chapel at Billinge had only cost a hundred and fifty pounds, yet it was deemed a matter of importance to secure a careful adjustment of the proceeds of the sale thereof. The building was transformed into cottages, which are likely to remain long as an evidence that James Mellor, whatever his peculiarities, delighted in sound work. It was arranged that the proceeds should be divided for the benefit of the two new chapels at Bollington and Rainow. The whole of the property was carefully valued; and afterwards the fittings of the old chapel were chiefly taken to Rainow, while the claims of Bollington were met by money payments. A large brass chandelier belonging to Billinge chapel was in those days greatly admired. This, during several subsequent years, adorned the chapel at Rainow. When it was superseded by lamps, a son of James Mellor purchased it. Well-nigh a century after the erection of Billinge chapel, that brass chandelier remained suspended in the bed-chamber of James Mellor the second.

It was a high day for the Methodists of Bollington when their chapel was opened. For the first time in the history of their village a house had been erected for God and consecrated to Him. Possibly some of the old folk were ready to fear that they would never there have such happy seasons as they had enjoyed in "the upper room" over the bark-mill. It is certain that even thirty years later such views were cherished and expressed by a few when that chapel was superseded by one larger and handsomer, though on the same site. But there was nevertheless great joy when Bollington

at length had a house of prayer. Those who rejoiced could not foresee all the results. Though the chapel would only remain thirty years, yet therein children would first learn of Jesus, and sing His praises, who would afterwards have the ability and disposition to help forward the work of God effectively throughout this country and in distant lands. We may cherish the hope that those children's children will emulate the generosity and godliness of their parents.

CHAPTER XX.

MACCLESFIELD A DISTRICT TOWN.

1808—1821.

AT the Conference of 1808 the preachers appointed to the Macclesfield Circuit were John Braithwaite, Charles Gloyne, William Hill; George Snowden, Supernumerary. Of these little has been recorded, though they were all permitted to labour long in the service of their Divine Master, seeking to promote the edification and extension of His Church. In particular we may refer to the case of Mr. Gloyne. He held a place among Methodist preachers for more than half a century, yet very brief references to his labours, successes, and disappointments are left on earth. Accidental circumstances frequently seem to decide what names, few among many worthy, shall be selected as a specimen of the host. Sufficient for any faithful servant of Christ that his name is written in "the Lamb's book of life," that the record of his work is on high, and that he can anticipate the time when, before assembled worlds, the Lord shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The gracious and very extensive revival with which

the Circuit had been favoured, seems to have rendered more chapel-building needful; while the great addition to the number of members caused such work to be practicable. The revival commenced while schemes for erecting houses of prayer were occupying the attention of the people, and the conversion of souls went on while the chapels were being raised, and the money collected. But the preachers were directed to ask leave of the Conference to do more work of this sort. In the "Minutes" for 1808 we read, in reply to the question "What chapels are to be built during the year?" as part of the answer, "Macclesfield Circuit;—one at Chinley, and one at Kettleshulme." Permission was now given to make a collection in the Congleton Circuit, as well as in Macclesfield Circuit, on behalf of Withington chapel. It was well known that the pulpit of Withington chapel was supplied from both Circuits; and possibly it might be surmised that, in all probability, it would eventually belong to Congleton, as it has really long done.

At the Conference of 1808 Stafford, for the first time, appears as the head of a Circuit. In order that this new Circuit should be formed, Macclesfield had to give up some of the places hitherto belonging to it. John Sedgwick was the first Superintendent of the Stafford Circuit, with John Roadhouse as his colleague. It is observable that Mr. Roadhouse is, in the "Minutes," designated "Missionary." That term, after a season, ceased for a time to be applied by the Conference to any of the brethren labouring in Great Britain. After the lapse of many years, the term has re-appeared in the Connexional official records. Not only junior brethren, but men of mark and experience are designated "Home-Missionary Ministers."

At this time Methodist preachers, whether resident

in Macclesfield or visiting the town in the prosecution of their godly work, were ever heartily welcomed at the home of Mr. John Birchenall, cotton manufacturer Hurdsfield. We find that as early as 1798 his name was on the "plan" as an accredited local preacher, and its position on the "plan" indicates that he had been for some time engaged in the work. For many years he laboured with zeal and acceptance in this department of Christian service. His name is found among those of the trustees of the New Sunderland Street chapel, in the deed executed in 1798, and also as a trustee of Bollington chapel, erected in 1807. Mr. Birchenall sought, in many ways, the promotion of the blessed Redeemer's kingdom, having himself experienced the great salvation.

Among other modes in which he endeavoured to advance the cause of Christ he provided, as we have said, hospitality when needed from time to time for the preachers. It so happens that it is this circumstance which gives distinctiveness to his memory. Mr. Birchenall had a somewhat large family, several of whom afterwards identified themselves with the Church of their father's choice. Among these children there was a lad named John, after his father. That youth has lived to make an impression on Methodism in Macclesfield of a more than ordinary kind. As a medical man he has for many years faithfully employed his many opportunities for doing good. His life has been long and saintly. Like his father he became a local preacher, and in that capacity has well served the cause of Christ. But he has especially earned a "good report" as a class-leader. Never, until the great day, will the good be known that he has effected. Long at the head of three large classes, and the wise and loving counsellor

of every member therein, Mr. Birchenall has left his mark for good on the hearts of hundreds. He may disapprove of this reference to himself, but is too near the gates of the City to be injured by it. He does credit to the training of his father's home.

Dr. Birchenall's recollections of the servants of Christ who were successively preachers in the Circuit, or guests in his father's dwelling, are vivid and deeply interesting. They have been of service in the present compilation and two or three of them may be advantageously given in Mr. Birchenall's own words.

"The connecting link in my own recollections between the race of preachers in actual operation and those who had preceded was Mr. Joseph Bradford, Mr. Wesley's companion in travel. In person he was above the ordinary stature, large-boned, robust, and hale. He had the air of a man who had seen much service. Though naturally frank and unpretentious, there was in his carriage an indication of the ascendancy which had been acquired by previous associations and habits.

"My earliest reminiscences stand connected with the preachers and other Methodist notabilities who visited at my father's house. Among the latter, well known in Stockport and the neighbourhood, sixty or seventy years ago, was James Selby. He was tall and gaunt in person, and unpolished in manners. But he was fervent in spirit, and though impulsive and boisterous, was mighty in prayer. In the social circle he would sit for a considerable time in a state of complete abstraction, his head resting upon his hands, and his elbows on his knees. His soul meanwhile was evidently absorbed in meditation and prayer, and the silence was unbroken save by an occasional sigh. Suddenly he would raise his head, and utter a shout of, 'Glory,

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Hallelujah!' which would ring through the house and electrify all present. My father had fitted up a room in his cotton-mill for preaching. James was there on one occasion, and, with the congregation, was seated in silence, when there was such a downfall of rust and soot from the stove-pipe as startled all. James appeared to have been in a profound reverie. When thus roused he ejaculated with much fervour, 'Glory be to God! I'll praise Thee, if the devil comes!"

We may just remark, in passing, that however spiritually-minded and zealous James Selby was, he would have been none the worse if divested of mere eccentricities. But we would see the Methodists of those times as they were. We will again allow Dr. Birchenall to speak of his early days, and of the men he looked up to when he was a boy.

"Edward Hampson was a collier by occupation. He was tall and athletic. He possessed a vigorous and active mind, and indomitable energy, combined with untiring zeal for the honour of God and the glory of the Redeemer. His whole character and deportment was sanctified by constant communion with heaven, for he was pre-eminently a man of prayer, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. He was one of a band of men who, from Sabbath to Sabbath, travelled far in various directions to hold meetings for prayer and exhortation in cottages, or any room that was accessible. There was in Edward Hampson a degree of bluntness in manner not desirable. Yet there was in his utterances so much of Divine influence that some were willing to walk a great distance in the anticipation of hearing him. On love-feast occasions, especially, his presence was always hailed with delight and expectation.

"Resembling him in physical form, and in depth of

religious feeling, was Samuel Bradshaw. There was however in Bradshaw a solemn gravity which was not so attractive as the vivid earnestness of Hampson. He was one of the earliest Methodists in the locality,—a stay-maker by trade. He had opportunities for reading and meditation which his friend Hampson did not possess, and these he turned to good account. He became familiar with the writings of many of the most earnest of the Puritan divines, and in the class and prayer-meeting he brought out of those treasures things new and old. Some of the sentiments derived from these sources, uttered by him in the deep sepulchral tones of a voice of barytone power, tended greatly in my early days, to give additional force to my impression concerning the realities of the eternal world."

The next reference is far from being entirely commendatory. Mr. Birchenall has wisely and kindly suppressed the name. The statement, thus guarded from abuse, may prove admonitory to some who may be in danger, though they have been converted to God and wish to be useful.

"Mr. Y——Z—— was, in my younger days, one of the oldest local preachers on the 'plan.' Indeed he was one of the few Methodists of the first generation who were then surviving. He was tall, had been robust and stately, but was now beginning to manifest the approach of old age. He was grave and thoughtful, with a tinge of hypochondriacism in his constitution. This gave a sombre expression to his countenance, and as his face had in early life been somewhat disfigured by small-pox, his features were not prepossessing. His natural disposition was rather frigid. What was far worse, he had long indulged in captiousness of thought and speech. His friendships were few, and his social

relationships uncertain. He had, however, married a lady in a position superior to his own, and one whose spirit and temper were exceedingly benign. His home was therefore peaceful, and a gentle influence was exercised over him. In the pulpit his aspect was solemn. The somewhat monotonous tones of a hollow, bass voice, with the lack of intellectual point and power, especially as his acquaintance with theology was superficial, made his deliverances unimpressive. Late in life he left the Society, on a question of Methodistic administration, though he occasionally attended public worship among us. His last years were spent in comparative solitude and inaction. His wife and daughters had long before been removed by death. Yet, before the final scene, there was reason to believe that his spirit became subdued before God, and so moulded by the Divine Spirit into the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that he was found ready for the brightness of eternal day.

"Betty Cooper was one of the finest specimens of a matured and gentle piety that Methodism in Macclesfield has ever furnished. She had a delicate softness and suavity of manner, blended with true kindliness of disposition, and a countenance resplendent with the beauties of holiness, and the simplicity and transparency of childhood. Her first religious impressions were received when she was a girl. Mr. Wesley, during one of his earliest vists to Macclesfield, took the little one on his knee, and, with his hand upon her head, implored the Divine blessing on her behalf. At the period of my acquaintance with her, she was a widow, and more than fourscore years old. She finished a life of intimate communion with God about the time I was attending the hospitals in London."

We must here close the selections from the jottings of Mr. Birchenhall, though in other parts of our sketches we shall be aided by the recollections which he retains of the preachers and others who, at the commencement of this century, and onwards during many years, were hospitably received in his father's house in Hurdsfield.

The appointment for 1810, and also for 1811, was :— "Robert Smith, Samuel Warren, and Charles Burton." The first-named minister "died in the work," in 1847, having been in the ministry fifty-five years. The two others became clergymen ; both were distinguished by the title of "Doctor," and both officiated in Manchester churches ; but there is reason to believe that neither of them ever had greater comfort than when living in Macclesfield and preaching, in their turn, at Sunderland Street chapel, and, throughout the Circuit, among "the people called Methodists," in association with whom they received their first spiritual good. Before Mr. Smith removed from Macclesfield he had the pleasure of directing, as Superintendent, the erection of a little chapel at Broken Cross.

Mr. Birchenhall, then a lad, regarded Mr. Charles Burton as a model preacher. Four years before his appointment to Macclesfield, his brother, James D. Burton, had spent one year in the Circuit. He "died in the work," having only completed the twelfth year of his ministry. Of him Dr. Birchenhall says: "He was of respectable parentage, had a finely-moulded frame, was amiable, courteous, frank and confiding. As a preacher he was eloquent, impressive, and popular. His early death was the occasion of poignant regret to all who knew him." But while Mr. Birchenall speaks thus highly of the elder brother, he still more fully

admired the younger one; and says:—"He combined with the pulpit qualifications of Mr. James an enthusiastic earnestness of manner, by which I could more vividly appreciate the message of an ambassador of Christ. He shortly afterwards married a lady whose prepossessions were not in favour of his position as a Methodist preacher. He withdrew from the Connexion, and took orders in the Established Church."

At the Conference of 1812 Robert Miller was sent to Macclesfield as Superintendent. He and his colleagues found themselves placed in somewhat perplexing circumstances. Two subjects especially were agitating the minds of the Methodist people,—the Sunday-school, and a proposed division of the Circuit, making Buxton the head of a new Circuit. Many of the most godly among the members of the Society had long been dissatisfied with some part of the school-tuition and government. They believed that the teaching of writing and arithmetic on the Lord's day was not in accordance with the Divine command, yet they had hitherto remained connected with the school, allowing those who chose to impart such instruction on the Sabbath to do so. It had been hoped that the practice would die out. At length, however, the parties into which the school authorities were divided could work together in peace no longer. As might be expected, other questions of an irritating nature had been introduced. Some of these were merely, or chiefly, personal. It is now impracticable to state the whole case, and undesirable to attempt to do so. There were good men on both sides; and it is enough to record, as a matter of history, that in consequence of these disputes, Mr. John Whitaker and others withdrew from the Methodist Society; that they continued to carry on the school according to

their own views; and that the Methodists in the year 1814 began one in which their views of the sanctity of the Lord's day, and the general laws and usages of Methodism, could be maintained. During five years the only Methodist Sunday-school in Macclesfield was conducted in an upper room, engaged for the purpose, in a silk-mill.

At the Conference of 1813 Buxton appears on the "Minutes" as the head of a Circuit. The "young man," Mr. C. Burton, had been removed thither from Macclesfield, with the addition of "William Carlton" as Superintendent. There was room for considerable difference of opinion as to the timeliness of this division, and those who were eloquent in speech, or ready with the pen, had a favourable opportunity for the exercise of their gifts. Of that opportunity it would seem that some availed themselves. This was specially perilous to the peace and prosperity of the Societies, because of the concurrent agitation respecting the school. But some would feel it impossible to forbear stating strongly "how absurdly cruel it was for men, with the feelings of men, to be required to traverse those mountain-paths in winter;" and others would feel constrained to express "their surprise that Macclesfield, with its resources, should send adrift poor Buxton, to exist painfully or die speedily." Mr. Carlton, one of the best of men, did suffer all the rest of his life from hardship endured in the new Circuit; but it might have been worse still if he had had the hilly "passes" to traverse in addition to the lofty roads. Harm was done by the discussions which took place, including criminations and recriminations. But "the word of the Lord endureth for ever," and "charity never faileth:" and so, in 1873, sixty years after this separation took

place, a beautiful new chapel was opened at Buxton, to which friends at many adjacent places contributed. But to Macclesfield, more than to any other place, was Buxton indebted, especially in the loan of its Superintendent, the Rev. Michael Johnson, who spent much time and toil in directing the affairs of the Circuit and chapel, and in journeying, oft and far, to collect funds on behalf of the erection.

Macclesfield Circuit was not, however, depressed in all respects during the year 1813. The removal of Dr. Coke to heaven had rendered organization for Mission effort indispensable, if the evangelization of the heathen was to be extended. In the preceding year the Methodists of the Macclesfield Circuit had raised twenty-five pounds for the Home and Foreign work. They raised an equal sum in 1813 by ordinary means; and emulated the doings and generosity of Leeds by a special subscription of fifty pounds.

In 1814 James Townley took the Superintendency. He had, while a probationer, spent one year in Macclesfield. In 1812 he re-appears as the second preacher. Instead of leaving at the end of two years, as was then usual, he remained a third year, in charge of the Circuit. As his colleagues he had men afterwards extensively known in our Israel,—John James, some time one of the Missionary Secretaries, and honoured by having two sons who became eloquent ministers among us; and John Rigg, an able minister, who selected as a wife (his first) the daughter of "Lawyer Clulow," and who is still represented by his honoured son the Principal at the Westminster Training College. Yet, notwithstanding such an appointment, the Circuit did not repeat its generous effort for Missions. Only ordinary means were employed, it seems, and thirty-five

pounds was the amount sent for the conversion of the heathen at home and abroad.

It ought to be stated that when Miss Clulow, having become Mrs. Rigg, left Macclesfield, her removal was felt to be a great loss to the Methodism of the town. The excellencies of good old Mrs. Clulow seemed to have been reproduced in her grandchild. Gifted beyond most, and favoured with early culture, and an advantageous social position, she had consecrated her all to her Redeemer. She had become rich in the best of all treasure by earnestly employing for Christ what had been entrusted to her. Among the many benevolent and religious movements in which she was engaged she took a leading part in the institution of "The Stranger's Friend and Infant Clothing Society." The godly people who regretted her departure could only console themselves by the reflection that, as in many other cases, one trained in their midst would be made an extensive blessing in other parts of the Lord's vineyard.

In 1814 Macclesfield was distinguished by being made the head of a District. The arrangement of the Connexion in Districts did not take place during Mr. Wesley's life-time. At the first Conference after his decease, that of 1791, the question was put:—"What regulations are necessary for the preservation of our whole economy, as the Rev. Mr. Wesley left it?" The reply to this was, "Let the three kingdoms be divided into Districts: England into nineteen Districts; Scotland into two, and Ireland into six." The twelfth English District had Chester as its head, and comprised, in addition to the Chester Circuit, the Macclesfield and Burslem Circuits. The number of preachers in the Chester District was ten, and one Supernumerary. The number of members in the District was three

thousand one hundred and eighty-eight. Chester continued to be the head of a District until 1814. At the Conference of that year there was a revision of Districts. Liverpool, hitherto in the Manchester District, was made a District town, and Chester was placed under it. Macclesfield was made the head of a District, comprising nine Circuits, and having twenty-two preachers, inclusive of Supernumeraries. The change added, however, no great dignity to Macclesfield. The Chairman for that year resided at Burslem. When Macclesfield was included in the Chester District, the Methodists of Macclesfield desired and had the privilege and honour of entertaining in their turn the ministers and stewards at the annual District Meeting; and after its elevation, Macclesfield was still willing that other Circuits should share the benefit with them. Circuits, like men, must depend for their real greatness on their spirit and performances, and not on their position.

In 1815 Mr. Rigg was succeeded by Mr. John Bowers, who like Mr Rigg, Mr. Bunting, and some others, obtained, in due time, a good wife from Macclesfield. Mr. Bowers asked Miss Esther Smallwood, daughter of Mr. Thomas Smallwood, and granddaughter of Mr. George Pearson, if she would be willing to share with him the toils and cares of the Itinerancy so soon as he should have passed his probation; and the young lady consented. During many years Mr. Bowers was an attractive and useful labourer in Circuit work; and for several years he exercised a truly paternal oversight over the students at Didsbury. He also, like many of his predecessors at Macclesfield, was in process of time elected to the Presidential chair. Fifty-three years after he received his first Circuit-appointment he was called to the heavenly rest.

In 1816, Jonathan Barker being Superintendent, a chapel was erected at Prestbury. That village had, for many ages, been the ecclesiastical centre of the entire neighbourhood. Probably a wider parish could scarcely be found than that of Prestbury. Macclesfield itself was but a chapelry dependent on Prestbury, and the townships similarly dependent were very numerous. But the place itself remained one of the most benighted in Cheshire. Instead of being a centre of religious light and holy influence, it was rather regarded as a place where godless pleasure-seekers might resort with the certainty of finding many like-minded. For miles round, indeed, the people generally went to Prestbury when they wanted to be married, when they had children to be christened, and when they had deceased friends to inter. But on Sundays and festival occasions the place was one of thoughtless merriment. Easter Sunday presented the grand climax to the evil. On that sacred day thousands of persons, from different parts of the immense parish, and from other localities, flocked to the holiday-making. It was held to be lawful that anybody should buy, or sell, or indulge in sports, according to their inclinations. Stalls and booths were raised, and ale and gingerbread, and nuts, and oranges, were sold throughout the day, church-hours included. Swings and "merry-go-rounds" were in full operation. It was generally believed that, by some ancient prescription, all this was allowable on the Sabbath on which Christian disciples specially honour their risen Saviour. No authorities, secular or ecclesiastical, dared to interfere with this long-established carnival. At the time the Methodist chapel was built in the village, and for some years afterwards, it was regarded by the mill-hands of the neighbourhood as the height of fashion to appear at

Prestbury on Easter Sunday, in a blue coat set off with brass buttons, in white trousers, and a showy waistcoat of gay pattern according to fancy. The women and girls, too, dressed in colours as bright as possible. Prestbury is not yet, alas, distinguished by vital godliness, but there is certainly a marked improvment in externals.

John Chettle travelled in Macclesfield from the Conference of 1817 to that of 1819. He had been in the ministry twenty years when he came to Macclesfield, and was spared thirty-three years longer. Before he left the Circuit he had the satisfaction of seeing a Sabbath-school erected in a quiet by-street, leading from Mill Street. The land was in the first instance transferred to the Rev. John Chettle by W. Brocklehurst, Esq., and Samuel Pearson, Esq., on five shillings being paid to each of them, and a *pepper-corn* afterwards, annually, "when lawfully demanded." It does not seem that the representatives of Messrs Brocklehurst and Pearson deem it desirable to demand the pepper-corn. The Wesleyan-Methodists, in 1819, thus fully entered on the work of Sabbath-school tuition in their own fashion. Though very early in the field, they had hitherto been prevented by circumstances from carrying out to any wide extent their own plans. Since then the Lord has largely blessed their endeavours to care for the "lambs."

In 1818 the Juvenile Missionary Society was formed. The Rev. John Stamp was at that time Superintendent. His sons, William W. (now Dr. Stamp) and John Stamp, were among the principal movers in the affair. They had, however, the concurrence of their father, and speedily gathered around them a band of willing workers. The first public meeting was

held in the upper room of Mill Street school, then recently built. When Brunswick chapel had been erected, the Juvenile Anniversary was held there, and that of the parent Society continued to be held in Sunderland Street. The late James Heald, Esq., of Parr's Wood, then a comparatively young man, presided on two or three occasions. At one of these early anniversaries there was danger of a repetition of the awful disaster which occurred in 1798 at Sunderland Street chapel. On the later occasion Brunswick chapel was still new. A crack was distinctly heard during the meeting. A man on the stairs, foolishly or wantonly, cried aloud, "The gallery is giving way." A general panic took place. Many in frantic alarm rose from their seats and endeavoured to escape from the place. Some who were near the front of the gallery attempted to leap over, but in each case some friend restrained the terror-stricken one. The gentlemen on the platform preserved their composure, and succeeded eventually in calming the apprehensions of the congregation. The majority returned to their seats, and the service proceeded. Some who had been most exposed to the pressure received bruises and injuries, from which they did not recover for a considerable time; yet, through a gracious Providence, no life was lost, nor was permanent injury sustained. During nearly sixty years that Juvenile Missionary Society has been worked with earnestness and success, and never more so than of late.

The spirit which prompted the outrages endured by the early Methodists had not passed away in the former part of the present century. It was no uncommon occasion of sorrow and complaint, among the ladies worshipping at Sunderland Street chapel, that on Sunday evenings, when it was dark, the colours of

their dresses were obliterated by the secret application of some chemical solution, or the texture of their silk gowns destroyed by strong mineral acids thrown upon them. Some cowardly miscreants, taking advantage of the darkness and the crowd, posted themselves for this purpose near the chapel-gates. This frequently occurred during the winter months. There was reason to believe that some of those thus unworthily engaged were men who, in the broad light of day, claimed to be respectable, and had access to the highest society the town afforded. The depraved taste and habits of the vulgar and dissipated in Macclesfield at this date were indicated by the amusement furnished for them by the "clowns," and others, who visited the town at "Barnaby Fair," and on similar occasions. These people frequently erected their booths or caravans on the Water's Green, near to the site of George Pearson's old house, in front of which Mr. Wesley preached his first sermon in Macclesfield, and not very far from the Methodist chapel in Sunderland Street. The clowns of those days found that few of their performances were more pleasing to the rabble who crowded around them than some gross caricature of Methodism. The Methodist "experience-meeting," extempore prayers, and especially the preaching, furnished scope for unhallowed burlesque and senseless fun. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." (1 John iii. 1.)

CHAPTER XXI.

BRUNSWICK CHAPEL. 1821—1827.

WHEN, at the Conference of 1821, Cleland Kirkpatrick was appointed as the Superintendent of the Macclesfield Circuit, the town had enjoyed many years of manufacturing and commercial prosperity. It had rapidly enlarged, and was still enlarging; Sutton and Hurdsfield had practically become parts of it. It pleased God to give prosperity to the Methodist cause during the residence of Mr. Kirkpatrick and his colleague, Joseph Roberts, especially in the last year of their united pastorate. It was consequently their joy to be allowed to inaugurate and foster a scheme for the erection of an additional chapel.

William Naylor and Isaac Keeling, who were appointed to Macclesfield at the Conference of 1823, found Brunswick chapel in the course of erection, and, in the spring immediately following their arrival, the spacious sanctuary was opened for Divine worship. The Rev. Jabez Bunting and the Rev. Robert Newton, (neither of whom had as yet received the title of Doctor in Divinity,) preached on the occasion. The chapel was thus consecrated to God on Sunday, May 30th, 1824. It was computed that not fewer than

fifteen hundred persons were present in the morning, and about the same number in the afternoon; and about seventeen hundred in the evening. Considering the accommodation afforded by the chapel since its enlargement, the congregations on that first Sunday must certainly have sat, or stood, very close together. The collections made at the three services in Brunswick, with that made at the evening service in Sunderland Street chapel, amounted to £153 5s. 1d., which was regarded then, and in the circumstances, as a large sum. It must be borne in mind, however, that "the people called Methodists" had not at that time attained to the ripened experience they now possess concerning the mischievous results of chapel-debts; and also that more than two thousand pounds had been given, or promised, before the building was thus opened. Mrs. Palfreyman generously gave £600 towards the new erection; but was not spared on earth to witness its opening. When the sound of holy song was for the first time heard within its walls, she, through God's mercy in Christ Jesus, was joining in the new Song in the heavenly temple. In her will she added a legacy of £200 more; thus being the principal contributor to the Brunswick chapel. The cost, with additions, was about £7,000. The Rev. Isaac Keeling, then travelling in the Circuit, composed a hymn which was used on the occasion; and, as it may be thought suitable for similar purposes, we reproduce it here:—

"WILL God indeed to earth descend,
In temples made with hands to dwell?
Lo, round, above, the heavens extend;
Can science their dimensions tell?
Their viewless bounds we seek in vain;
Yet, can the heavens our God contain?

"No! the vast firmament, with all
Its wandering stars, and seas of light;
The deeps which echo the sad call
Of spirits lost in endless night,
Heaven, hell, and all their bounds include,
Are points in His Infinitude.

"Yet, through His co-eternal Son
Who wields all power on earth, on high,
By fervent prayer His grace is won;
He hears the penitential sigh;
And saints, assembling in His name,
His presence in the midst may claim.

"Thus saith the Great and Lofty One,
Who liveth in eternity,
'On high, apart, I set My throne;
Yet with the souls that turn to Me,
The contrite who themselves abase,
I have a lowly dwelling place.'"

In 1813 Mr. Keeling, then a probationer, had to preach at five o'clock in the morning during the District Meeting held that year in Macclesfield. The Superintendent of the Circuit, when announcing the service, spoke of Mr. Keeling in a very emphatic manner as "a young man of considerable promise." Possibly such public commendation immediately before such a test was not desirable. But in that early service the preacher manifested that the opinion of the Superintendent was correct. The text and the general impression produced are still remembered. Mr. Keeling preached that morning from Psalm lxvi. 3; "Say unto God, how terrible art Thou in Thy works!" While, in after years, Mr. Keeling was one of the Macclesfield preachers, his worth was apparent. In 1855 he was elected President. His life was unusually protracted. He was called to the heavenly rest in the fifty-eighth year of his ministry.

William Naylor, who was Superintendent at Macclesfield when Brunswick chapel was opened, continued in the "full work" until he had completed his sixtieth year of "travelling." He survived six years as a Supernumerary. He laboured in many of the most important Circuits in the Connexion, and was so esteemed that during forty-five years he never left a Circuit until he had been three years therein. In those days this was of course more remarkable than in modern times.

Among the laymen occupying at this period a prominent position in Methodism at Macclesfield, Mr. Thomas Brocklehurst was conspicuous for his ability, zeal, and liberality. As his early years, and a manhood more than ordinarily vigorous, were devoted unsparingly to the cause of Christ, and his life abounded with interesting incident, we are tempted to linger a little on his history. Those who only knew him when the infirmities of old age were apparent, could form little idea of the man as, through a lengthened period, he toiled for his blessed Master with special aptitude, earnestness, generosity, and success.

Mr. Brocklehurst was accustomed frankly and gratefully to acknowledge God's goodness, both in His providence and grace. Feeling himself laid under obligation to declare "what great things the Lord had done for him," he also strove diligently to make a suitable return. He had experienced the truthfulness of the declaration, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 5, 6.) When a youth he endured a grievous wrong. He was under the guardianship of an uncle, who had within his control sufficient funds for the boy's

education and future establishment in business. This kinsman proving selfish and unjust, the lad was apprenticed in a manner which doubtless he felt to be a needless and cruel injustice. Divine providence, however in a short time effected a favourable alteration in his position.

Whilst an apprentice at Stafford he attended, for a season, St. Mary's church. On one occasion the Rev. — Gurney, of St. Clement Danes, preached there. The youth was much impressed by Mr. Gurney's sermon, but was perplexed by finding that some of the hearers expressed, in an emphatic manner, their disapproval of such preaching. These declared, in Thomas's hearing, that Gurney was "only fit for a Methodist chapel." He therefore thought that if the truth which had proved so instructive to him were similar to what the Methodists were accustomed to hear continually, their chapel was the place for him. So he went thither to hear for himself, and, after doing so a few times, resolved that he would there worship and seek the great salvation. He was speedily led by the gracious Spirit into the enjoyment of God's pardoning and renewing grace. Having joined the Methodist Society in Stafford, he now gave all diligence to get good and do good. His ability was quickly discerned, and the youth was requested to join the band of prayer-leaders. Some even then admired his gift in prayer. At any rate he was a capital walker, and was afraid of neither snow, rain, blast, nor darkness.

At this early period of his history he had a Bible which he greatly prized. The book was really a handsome one, and somewhat expensive. Besides, it was a convenient size to use in going to chapel, and also to the country places where he might be required to read a chapter or give an exhortation. The volume had also

been sufficiently long in the youth's possession to become very sacred as the medium by which many a blessing had been conveyed to his soul. In addition to these circumstances, giving value to the Bible, there was another which is preserved as a family tradition: the book had been presented to the boy by one whom he highly respected. A lady resident in Stafford, daughter of one of the judges, had long been diligent in the Church of England Sunday-school. She had become interested in the orphan boy, who for a season was so unkindly treated. To the credit of the lady it ought to be added that, when the boy became a Methodist, she did not renounce him, but was ever ready to render him any aid he needed. On one occasion, for instance, the Methodists, having something special going forward, concluded that the presence of the regimental band would prove advantageous: many who found no delight in Methodistic services might be attracted by military music. Thomas Brocklehurst asked the kind lady to use her influence, which proved successful. At the hour when the band should have been playing for the gratification of the officers at mess, it was doing service for the Methodists! After this digression, too long perhaps, we merely have to state that the beautiful Bible had been given by this good lady to him.

On the youth's return one Sunday evening from a country appointment, he discovered, to his unutterable distress, that the precious volume was not forthcoming. He knew that he had used it during the service, and had brought it away with him, yet, alas, it was not in his pocket, where he believed he had placed it. It was certain, therefore, that somewhere on the road during the dark journey the treasure had been dropped. How

this had happened could only be conjectured. His anxiety was great. It would be some time before he could buy such a book. Besides, no new Bible would be the *identical* one which he had learned to prize. Texts were therein marked which had been made a blessing to him. His spiritual life had, of late, been to a considerable extent, associated with *that* copy of Holy Scripture. Yet it was lost, and, apparently, irrevocably so. Its handsome appearance and pecuniary value rendered its recovery less likely, as it could readily be sold by the person who found it. What could be done?

He would cheerfully have spent the night in securing its restoration, but, during the darkness, search would be in vain. The God-fearing youth knew of but one resource available, and that he employed. He made his "trouble" known to his Lord. He then slept. During the night, however, he had a dream. It was concerning his Bible, and he awoke in agitation. He had dreamed that he had found the volume, lying in a deep rut, in a part of the lane so marked by its winding and the trees that he was sure he could identify the place. It was still dark, and he lay down again and slept. The dream was repeated, and with exactness of detail. The youth again awoke. It was now twilight.

He sprang from his bed. There was yet time to reach the place indicated and be back for business. He hurried along lest he should be late, and his employer should be grieved. When he reached the spot, he saw, as in the dreams, the much-prized volume actually lying in the rut! He also beheld at the very moment a heavily-laden waggon approaching, and observed that the wheels were rolling along the identical rut. But for his dream, and also his *conscientious haste*, the

book must have either been picked up by the driver or have been crushed beneath the wheels. He returned exulting in the renewed possession of his treasure, and also greatly strengthened in his confidence that God is "the Hearer of Prayer."

Soon after the completion of his apprenticeship Mr. Brocklehurst removed to Macclesfield, to commence business there on his own account. To some extent, at least, the wrong done to him whilst a youth had been rectified, and he was now in a position to purchase suitable stock. He henceforth became closely identified, through many years, with the Methodism of Macclesfield. His zeal, energy, and self-forgetfulness were unabated, while his gifts had improved by use, his experience had enlarged, and his resources were becoming more ample.

One instance, among many, of God's providential care extended over him may be here recorded: on this and similar events in his life the good man delighted to dwell. He was accustomed to visit Nantwich on business. He generally started early in the day, driving from Macclesfield, and frequently called on a friend at Congleton, who was engaged in the same business, that he might accompany him. In the evening the friend alighted at Congleton, and Mr. Brocklehurst performed the rest of the journey homewards alone. This arrangement was, of course, tolerably well known in the town, and it might be reasonably supposed that considerable money transactions took place at such times. As, however, the return journey was generally completed in good time, there was no great need for apprehending any attempt at robbery, and Mr. Brocklehurst was not the man to be troubled by any groundless fancies.

On one of these occasions he stayed at Congleton to

take a hasty supper at his friend's house, whilst his horse also had suitable refreshment. When, after supper, Mr. Brocklehurst left the house to look after his horse, while speaking to the groom, he was struck by the manner in which a strange dog came up to him, apparently desirous to form his acquaintance. Of course his impulse was to dismiss the animal. This, however, proved no easy task. Neither he nor the groom could drive it away. Mr. Brocklehurst then re-entered the house, where his canine friend could not follow him. Those within briefly conversed respecting our ceaseless need of Divine protection, and this blessing was implored by them on their bended knees. When Mr. Brocklehurst, accompanied by his friends, came to the house-door the dog was still near it; and he got into his gig, half wondering whether or not the creature would follow him. The dog was neither disposed to do so nor to leave him, but at once sprang into the gig. An attempt was about to be made to dislodge the animal in a summary manner, when Mr. Brocklehurst in cheery tones said,—"Let the dog alone; perhaps the Lord has sent it." So the friends bade each other "good night," and Mr. Brocklehurst drove rapidly out of Congleton.

It was a moonlight night, and no danger was apparent until the travellers had proceeded some distance. Probably Mr. Brocklehurst had almost forgotten the dog, and the surmises his behaviour had occasioned, when the animal crept from beneath the seat where he had esconced himself, and took a position more favourable for seeing and hearing. After gazing, or listening, or both, for a brief space, the animal jumped from the gig and hurried forward, gaining rapidly on the horse, (by taking a field-crossing and coming again into the

main road at a sharp angle,) so that before long he was lost to sight. What was the meaning of this? Had the sagacious brute discerned that he was approaching his master's dwelling, and, having ridden so far without paying, or intending to pay, now escaped so as to give no clue to his residence? Before Mr. Brocklehurst had had sufficient time to adopt any theory on this subject, he heard the loud barking of a dog, and speedily saw in the clear moonlight his new acquaintance in declared hostility to some one. This person had either been standing at the outlet of the by-path from the field-crossing to the main road, or had been lurking under the hedge, and was now apparently wishful to come fully on the road. The dog was evidently resolved that, for the present, the lurker should not do so, and was prepared to resist such attempt to the death. Mr. Brocklehurst drove close past the antagonists, and could distinctly discern the man's figure, and features, and attire. He was one of those fellows whom no unarmed man, having money, would like to meet in such place and at such hour. The traveller did not stop to make any inquiries, but quickened the pace of his horse for a time. He soon, however, allowed the animal to proceed at a more moderate rate, and, looking back, saw indeed no trace of the man, but dimly beheld the dog hurrying after him. He pulled up for his canine guard, and the dog gladly resumed his place in the gig. The creature went home with the good man whom it had so cared for, enjoyed a bountiful supper provided for him, and slept on the premises. In the morning, however, it was not to be found. It must have risen early and gone on other business. Mr. Brocklehurst and his friends felt such interest in the affair that a reward was immediately publicly offered, to

ascertain if any one had missed the dog, or could identify it.

But if Mr. Brocklehurst never again saw or heard anything respecting the dog, he both heard and saw more concerning the man. A short time after the occurrence just related, there was one day a considerable stir in the town. A little crowd passed Mr. Brocklehurst's residence. Two soldiers with mounted bayonets were escorting a desperately resolute-looking stranger whom they had in custody. Mr. Brocklehurst thought he recognized in him the man whom the dog had prevented from approaching him. He made further inquiries, and went to the Court-house when the culprit was undergoing his examination previous to his committal. This confirmed his convictions of the identity: it was in evidence that the fellow was a deserter, and that he had been arrested while attempting to commit a robbery the same night, not far from the place where he had been so strangely encountered by the dog. Possibly the reckless transgressor had ascertained that it was probable Mr. Brocklehurst might have money on his person, or had judged that any man driving would have a watch or other valuables; or the rascal might have wanted the horse and gig to assist him in escaping from the neighbourhood, and from the soldiers who were likely to be in pursuit of him. Anyhow, when Mr. Brocklehurst scrutinised him leisurely in his cell, as well as in the Court-house, he was certain that the accused was the same person whom he had left on the road in the guardianship of the dog, and was convinced that "the Lord had delivered" him from great peril. The prisoner was committed for trial, and eventually convicted. We are informed that the deserter substantially admitted the above facts, and

acknowledged his having been "panic-struck" at the attitude of the dog.

We must not enter into farther narration of events in Mr. Brocklehurst's life. He loved to dwell on the way in which his gracious God "had led him." Whilst doing so he endeavoured to manifest his gratitude by earnest service. He laboured diligently as a Local-preacher; and often exhausted even *his* vigorous health "in labours more abundant" for the good of his fellow-men. He would "spend and be spent," until, against the repeated remonstrances of his family, and of his medical advisers also, he aggravated the asthma from which he suffered intensely. As a class-leader he was eminently successful, in consequence of God's blessing on more than ordinary tact and toil. At the same time he was indefatigable in collecting for and supporting the Macclesfield branch of the Bible Society; persevering in attention to the interests of the Dispensary; generous and warm-hearted in his hospitality to those of Christ's servants who visited the town; and ready for "every good word and work." Through his kindness to the sick and poor he was often styled "good old father," or "good old doctor," Brocklehurst.

Perhaps one method he employed to extend the Redeemer's kingdom ought to be specially recorded. He was steward of Sunderland Street chapel during several years. While attentive to the financial affairs of the chapel, he looked far beyond them. He did more than most to induce such as were indifferent to public worship to hear the Word in Sunderland Street, or some other house of God. It was his constant practice to enter into conversation with groups of men whom he found loitering at the corners of the streets, and by his kind earnestness he generally succeeded in persuading

some among the group to go to the service at the Methodist chapel. Occasionally he adopted a more daring course. He would make his appearance in the midst of a godless company assembled for a "jolly" night in some tavern, and begin at once to reason with them concerning a "more excellent way." Not unfrequently the pitcher and glass were left, and the chapel resorted to. To the Methodists worshipping in Sunderland Street it became a matter of course to see Mr. Brocklehurst approaching the place in company with some habitual neglector of God's house. Frequently they would be linked arm in arm, suggesting the temporary association of a privateer and the prize recently taken by royal authority. In various ways did Mr. Brocklehurst, throughout the many years of his vigour, seek the glory of Christ and the welfare of souls.

Many other Methodists were at this time living near to God, and seeking to advance the highest welfare of their fellows in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, yet their names can have no record in these pages. Most of them have already received the gracious approval of their Lord, and others are with joy, solemn and lowly, anticipating such approval. A few more Macclesfield Methodists may be referred to, though with brevity.

Mr. and Mrs. James Sargent were both Leaders in the Macclesfield Society. Each walked closely with God: each was blessed and made a blessing. As of Zacharias and Elizabeth in olden time, it may be truthfully affirmed concerning Mr. and Mrs. Sargent, "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

Towards the close of 1821 Mr. Samuel Braddock

entered the heavenly rest. He joined the Society while Macclesfield was favoured with the ministrations of the Rev. D. Simpson, and, though a thorough Methodist, was accustomed at times to repair to the services of the church, where in early life he had often been blessed. A few months later Mr. Thomas Harrop, of Harrop, was removed to the paradise of God. He also was of the number who sought aid in the spiritual life from the ministrations of Mr. Simpson, as well as from those of the Methodist preachers. He was led by a pious friend to a class-meeting when but seeking the "pearl of great price;" and soon afterwards he obtained the blessing. During nearly thirty years he was the Leader of a class. At one time during his latest illness, he was "in heaviness through manifold temptation." But this was only for "a season." The experienced believer, now near the gates of the City, cried to the Lord for succour; and it was given. Weeping for gladness he declared; "This is to me a joyful morning; the Lord has manifested Himself to my soul; and I feel such a power to cast myself upon His mercy, that I am astonished at His goodness."

During the spring of 1825 Mr. Francis Swindells entered life eternal. As a Local-preacher, he had worked for God with considerable advantage to the village Societies. He rejoiced to set forth the possibility and advantages of complete consecration to God. Towards the close of his life on earth he was prevented by a distressing asthma, for several months, from engaging in the active service in which he delighted. But he was largely favoured with those gracious influences he had encouraged others to seek. The day before his death he spoke much concerning the wonderful manner in which, of late, the Lord had

revealed Himself to him. On the morning of the day he died he rose, dressed himself without aid, and went downstairs, thinking not that the gates of the City were so near. The summons arrived. The aged saint had but just time to say, "Eternal life is won; all is well," and his happy spirit was caught away to share the bliss of the glorified.

Mrs. Jane Bagshaw survived until June 2, 1825, yet was born before the first Methodist Society was formed, or the Wesleys had for themselves obtained the blessing of conscious pardon. She was herself a member of the Methodist Society, for a few years, prior to Macclesfield being placed at the head of a Circuit, or having a resident preacher. Though thirty-one years old when she joined the Society, then recently constituted, she was spared to be during sixty years a consistent and honoured member of it. Towards the close of her long life she was a subject of painful affliction, but was largely favoured with the consolations of the Holy Ghost. She was enabled at that extreme age to testify to the faithfulness of her covenant-keeping God. It was delightful to those who loved her to hear from her lips the assurance of the Lord's presence with her. She said:—"Christ is precious, very precious to me. I have a bright prospect before me; I have no doubt; I shall soon reach my heavenly home, and then my soul will be at rest for ever. Glory be to God! I am happy. I shall wear that crown of glory which fadeth not away: I would not part with my present views and feelings for worlds. How I long to depart! but I am to wait a little longer; and the Lord, I trust, will give me faith and patience." As the venerable woman drew nearer to the closing hour, her prospect became yet brighter, and she rejoiced with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Kettleshulme, where this mother in Israel resided, had, with Buxton, been separated from the Macclesfield Circuit; and when Mrs. Bagshaw was taken to heaven, a feeling of sorrow at her removal, and thankfulness for her glorious triumph, was experienced by many in Macclesfield.

We are disposed to linger on the name of David Bancroft, who exchanged earthly toil for heavenly triumph on October 25, 1827. Mr. Bancroft was an eminently faithful and successful Leader, such as Methodism at this time greatly needs: many such are now living and labouring for the honour of their Redeemer and the welfare of souls, but Methodism could provide a place for a thousand more like David Bancroft. From his class there were raised up nine Leaders, and eight Local-preachers. Sixteen members of the class were removed during his Leadership to the celestial world, triumphing gloriously through the Blood of the Lamb; yet the class was constantly increasing. The secret of Mr. Bancroft's success may be disclosed in two words:—Prayerfulness and painstaking. He was not wealthy, so that he could not afford such help to the indigent as would incline the needy to prefer his class. Indeed at times his own circumstances were seriously straitened. He was not spared to old age, so as to have a period of service unusually protracted. Twenty years from the time he entered the "wicket gate," at the beginning of the pilgrimage, he entered through the gates into the City above. His service was comparatively brief, and performed in circumstances somewhat unfavourable, yet, by the help of God he accomplished much. When called to his rest his crown would not be starless. On being requested to take charge of a class he gave his whole

soul to the work. He commenced with three members; and in less than three years the number was increased to fifty-seven. This extraordinary success admits of explanation. At the close of each public service he cast an affectionate glance on the congregation. If he observed any who appeared impressed by the truth, he spoke kindly to them, and endeavoured to lead them to the Saviour, urged their diligent attendance on all the means of grace, and lovingly invited them to the class-meeting. This was not all. His was a zeal which looked far beyond the mere augmentation of numbers. He diligently strove to visit his absent class-members every week, as well as to meet those present at the appointed time and place. Over the lukewarm and unfaithful he mourned and wept until he prevailed on them to follow the Lord fully. He prayed for every member of his little flock daily. The hour previous to meeting them was spent in secret prayer, and, by the unction which attended his efforts afterwards, his Father who seeth in secret rewarded him openly. At five o'clock in summer, and at six in winter, he met in "band" those who sought still further to realise the Christian life, and at this early meeting, as at other religious services, was seldom a moment behind the time.

Mr. Bancroft's death was peaceful and triumphant. With confidence he committed his wife and children to the God of all goodness. While suffering extreme pain his soul exulted in a clear prospect beyond the grave. On the day of his death, conscious that the time of his departure was at hand, he emphatically repeated the cheering declaration, "I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow

them." The dying saint then lifted up his eyes towards heaven, and waved his hand in token of triumph. His wife whispered, "You are showing us whither you are going." He replied in the affirmative, then closed his eyes, and so entered into the joy of his Lord.

Wesleyan Methodism has many needs in order that it may fully accomplish the glorious task assigned to it in God's Providence. It has no greater need, perhaps none equally urgent, than myriads of godly, prayerful, earnest, unwearied Leaders like David Bancroft. With an ample supply of such men we should now, with our other resources, speedily do a marvellous work for Christ and the souls He died to redeem.

CHAPTER XXII.

POWER FROM ON HIGH, 1828—1837.

ABOUT Michaelmas in the year 1828 a revival of religion commenced which became very extensive, and the results of which were both gracious and permanent. Indeed the whole period included in this chapter is still regarded by survivors as having been distinguished in a very unusual degree by "power from on high." After the Conference of 1828 Robert Pilter, who had already been in Macclesfield two years as Superintendent, was joined by John Walsh and W. O. Booth. The Circuit had been improving for some time, but there had been no unusual degree of awakening and converting influence. The ministers, and the godly people associated with them, entered on the Methodistic year by uniting in special and earnest supplication to God that He would mightily extend His work. For a few weeks no change was observable. At length the answer to prayer was given. There were two localities, somewhat remote from Macclesfield, which had for a long season been specially discouraging. It seemed as though nothing could arouse the ungodly of those places: the professors of religion were becoming very few; and some of these few were evidently half-hearted, while the others were dispirited. On the same Sunday

evening, in these two villages, sinners were pricked to the heart under the preaching of God's Word, and, in the prayer-meetings, cried aloud for mercy.

The tidings brought to Macclesfield from these places greatly encouraged those who were toiling for God, and looking for His aid. They were led to throw themselves with augmented ardour into the work, and with increased confidence to intercede at the Throne of Grace for the salvation of souls. The holy flame spread from place to place, and the entire Circuit was soon in a blaze. Large numbers of young persons were led to consecrate themselves to God. Not a few of these are active, loving labourers for the Lord Jesus to this time. Many others, more advanced in life, sought and found God's pardoning and renewing grace, and have already joined the multitude of the blood-washed before the Throne.

In the toils connected with that memorable revival several young men, who had previously given their hearts to God, took a part. Some of these are still spared in the neighbourhood, and are, though with diminished physical vigour, serving God and their generation. Among this zealous band were two who, at the Conference of 1829, were sent forth into the Mission field, and who there made "full proof" of their ministry. The name of Peter Turner will never be forgotten in the annals of Christ's Church in the Friendly Islands. He was sent to Tonga when as yet a sanguinary superstition presented an unbroken and horrid front antagonistic to the religion of Jesus. In 1874 Mr. Turner still lives, in New South Wales, awaiting the summons to the glorious rest. William Faulkner, Mr. Turner's faithful friend, was at the same time sent to Newfoundland, there to preach "the unsearchable

riches of Christ." He manfully endured hardness in his Master's cause, and was spared until 1872, when he exchanged mortality for life.

About this time a small chapel was built at Langley, a village beautifully-situated but ungodly. The Methodists of Macclesfield had long endeavoured, in their usual way of open-air preaching and cottage-services, to advance the cause of true religion in that neighbourhood. Godr aised them up a powerful friend in the person of David Yates, Esq., of Langley Hall, who became favourable to those evangelistic efforts. Mrs. Yates was like-minded. They had the satisfaction of seeing one of their daughters, Charlotte, specially zealous and useful in the service of Christ. This young lady gathered around her several of the women and girls of Langley and its vicinity, that they might learn their way to Christ and heaven. Perhaps the family at the Hall still regarded themselves as members of the Established Church. Certainly they were engaged in Christian work, by whatever name it might be designated. The chapel was opened for Divine worship in 1818, to the great joy of those who had so learned to value the ministrations of the Methodist preachers as to wish to have for them, themselves, and their neighbours, more and better accommodation than any cottage could furnish. In some respects it would have been advantageous, when this first chapel at Langley was building, to have had old James Mellor, of Hough Hall, on the spot. He would have been of great use as "clerk of the works." Much love for God's cause was manifested in providing for the erection of the chapel, and real singleness of purpose. Those who contributed agreed in the wish that the building should be the Lord's, and beyond mere individual control. But there was no

great amount of keen-sighted sagacity displayed by those who were responsible for the payment of the builders, and no special ability or integrity by the builders themselves. Hence in a very few years the chapel was manifestly going to decay. The flooring was being destroyed by dry-rot; and on one occasion the ceiling fell so extensively, and with such a crash, that, had the catastrophe happened during Sabbath worship, it was deemed certain that several persons would have been maimed if not killed outright. Previously to that, early one Sunday morning, a window was completely blown in, so that joiners had to board the space up before divine service could be conducted. The walls raised by James Mellor on Billinge Brow had stood almost half a century before those at Langley were built, and were far more exposed to tempestuous winds than the latter, yet showed no signs of decay. Whatever else might be affirmed of James, he knew good workmanship, and would both perform and demand it.

The old chapel at Langley, before it was pulled down to avert the consequences which might result from its tumbling at an inconvenient time, was the scene of a gracious reward to Mr. and Mrs. Yates. They had long mourned over a poor, unhappy prodigal son. They bitterly felt that James, of whom they once hoped so much, and whom they still dearly loved, was so vile that he was not only a disgrace to themselves, but a by-word of reproach in the entire district. His conduct was enough to contaminate all Langley. Mr. Yates felt like Eli of old, and his expostulations seemed to be of as little force as those of Eli. At length his son fled to America, and was lost sight of for a season. Yet, after the lapse of years, in that shaky old chapel at Langley, James Yates told in the hearing

of many how God had saved his soul, reprobate as he had been, plucking him as a brand from the burning.

On May 21st 1858 a new chapel, so beautiful as to be an ornament in a neighbourhood where nature has done much to please the eye, was consecrated by prayer and praise. Badly as the old one had been built, there was somehow a debt of two hundred pounds on it at the time of its demolition. But there were those who were able and willing to aid generously in the undertaking. Among these Mr. William Pritchard, who entered into life eternal in 1855, and Mr. William Smith, who slept in Jesus in 1868, were prominent.

In 1830, while Alexander Bell was Superintendent, "Lawyer" Clulow entered the eternal world. Though not a member of the Society, except for a short period in his early youth and while under the control of his mother, John Clulow was closely identified with the Methodism of Macclesfield during many years. To those who were largely acquainted with his character and conduct, a deeply-interesting study was thereby presented. Even the jottings which have been preserved, and may be here told, are instructive.

Mr. Clulow's unvarying attachment to Methodism was remarkable. It arose we suppose chiefly from his complete intellectual approval of its doctrines, discipline, and influence; strengthened by its being the Church wherein the excellencies of his mother had been developed. So far as the worldliness of his heart would allow, Mr. Clulow was a most devoted and unchanging Methodist.

In his house, and at his own earnest desire, a prayer-meeting and class-meeting were held. He was, however, never present himself. He was as fully resolved that these meetings should not be discontinued as he

was that, at least for the present, he would not attend them. Complaints were made at the Leaders' meeting that he never sanctioned the gatherings by joining them; and on one occasion it seemed likely that the decision of the Leaders would be adverse to the continuance of the services. A Leader, whom we will call Mr. X——, affirmed that he thought Mr. Clulow would attend if "properly asked." So the subject was dropped, that Mr. X—— might ask him "properly." On the next prayer-meeting night, this individual went to the house, and asked for the lawyer. The servant said that he was particularly engaged, and could not be seen. Being an acknowledged friend of Mr. Clulow, however, he could use some degree of freedom, and inquired in which room he was. He was told. The room was only separated by a passage from that in which the meeting was to be held. Mr. X—— felt that he must succeed, and would therefore venture somewhat. He knocked at the door, and when Mr. Clulow said, "Come in," obeyed. Two or three gentlemen were there in converse with the solicitor. On the table decanters were intermingled with papers and parchments. The intruder at once said, "O, Mr. Clulow, I've come to ask you to step across to the prayer-meeting." "You must really excuse me," was the reply, "we are very busy." "I see," said the fearless man, "but we shall not be long; and, to save time, we can come in here." To the horror of Mr. Clulow and his clients, Mr. X—— opened the door of the other room, calling aloud, "Come, friends, we are going to hold the meeting here to night." Such was the esteem in which Mr. X—— was held that this strange procedure was not resented. The decanters were hurried out of sight, and the prayer-meeting, most

likely somewhat brief, was held. At the next Leaders' meeting the kind-hearted intruder gravely stated that certainly Mr. Clulow was present at the last prayer-meeting held in his house. Of course all there knew what had occurred, yet they allowed the meetings to be tried a little longer. So deeply solicitous was the lawyer that these services should be continued in his residence that, it is stated, on another occasion, when he had learned that the Leaders were about to discuss the question of their cessation, he surprised them by walking into the vestry where they were assembled, and declining to withdraw until they had promised not to meddle with the established arrangement.

Mr. Clulow was very kind to any poor people in whom he became interested, but especially to those who were members of the Society to which his sainted mother had so long belonged, and of which he knew it was her earnest desire that he should become a worthy member. Though he would not enter the room where the Methodists assembled while they were singing and praying, he often contrived to meet them in the passage as they left; and, either there or in some room to which he would ask them, would place in the hands of the necessitous some suitable gift. Not unfrequently would he employ those in whom he confided to take to the poor that which he was inclined to bestow.

The lawyer's views of true religion were clear. He knew what his mother's religion consisted of, and how she obtained it. Hence he placed not his reliance for salvation either on the services held in his house, nor on his regular attendance at Sunderland Street chapel, nor on his alms-giving. On one occasion he placed a five-pound note in the hands of a Leader, saying, "You know what to do with this. Divide it among your poor

folk." The Leader took hold of the generous hand, and grasping it affectionately said, "O, Mr. Clulow, you are very kind. We are greatly obliged to you. But, do you know some of us are afraid that you are trusting to get to heaven in this way?" "Then," was the reply, "you are a lot of simpletons,—that's all. Do you think that I've listened to the Methodist preachers all these years to so little purpose as that? No! I know better." Lawyer Clulow prized the good seed, yet allowed thorns to choke it during many years. We can only hope that a godly mother's prayers were at length answered, and that at last, through God's infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, he obtained the salvation which he ever acknowledged he needed.

At the Conference of 1831 the Rev. John Farrar was sent as the third preacher, and remained in that position at Macclesfield during three years. His ministrations, both in the pulpit and in the homes of the people, were highly valued, and recollections of what he then said are still cherished by some of the aged disciples. Though Mr. Farrar was number three, he could scarcely have been designated "the young man." He had already had some experience as a Methodist preacher. His earliest years in the ranks were not, strictly speaking, spent in "the Itinerancy." During four years, his entire probation in the ministry, he lived at Woodhouse Grove as the second master. In addition to these, five more years had been spent by him in Circuit work when he was appointed to Macclesfield. Afterwards, in 1839, he was placed as Governor of Abney House. In 1843 he was sent to Richmond as Classical Tutor, and fulfilled the duties of that office during fourteen years. In 1858, he was appointed Governor of Woodhouse Grove School, where

he had formerly been second master. In 1868, after completing his forty-sixth year in the ministry, he entered on fresh responsibilities as Governor of the new branch of the Theological Institution, then recently opened at Headingley. Mr. Farrar was elevated to the Presidential chair in 1854, and in 1870 was distinguished, at a time when re-elections were rare, and regarded as very special, by having the honourable position of President a second time assigned to him.

The Rev. Thomas Moss, who spent three years in association with Mr. Farrar, was permitted to labour for God in the Itinerant ministry for forty-four years with acceptance and success. His spirit was marked by great kindness, deep humility, and love to the work of God. His latest utterances were in sacred service. One Sunday morning, while in the pulpit, he was so stricken by sudden illness as to be speechless. In three days he passed away, to sing, in the temple above, the "song of Moses" and the "song of the Lamb."

In 1832 Messrs. Moss and Farrar welcomed to Macclesfield as their Superintendent the Rev. Elijah Morgan. During the year of their association there was peace within the Circuit. But before Mr. Morgan left Macclesfield he had need of all the good sense, kindliness, firmness, and experience he possessed. Dr. Warren had become embittered against certain Connexional authorities because they had not allotted to him a position he desired, and for which he believed himself qualified. He was suspended by the Manchester District-meeting for contumacy and slander, and was eventually by the Conference expelled. The excitement throughout the Connexion was very great. In many instances dislikes, prejudices, and disputes, at first entirely local, were blended with what appertained

to Dr. Warren. The Macclesfield Society was in great peril. It did not, however, eventually suffer any extensive injury. This exemption from the evil which threatened it, and which left sad and abiding scars elsewhere, was, under God, chiefly owing to two circumstances:—The Macclesfield Methodists had in Mr. Morgan a Superintendent eminently judicious, who mingled unshaken loyalty to Methodism with unvarying kindness to those who were excited and misled; and, secondly, the Preachers and faithful friends gave themselves to prayer and toil for Christ, and were favoured with glorious seasons of converting and sanctifying influence. We may refer to this latter circumstance a little more fully, but will just now add, concerning Mr. Morgan, that he was spared to enter on his sixty-seventh year, when he was still in the "full work." In May 1852 he went to the District-meeting held at Bath. There he was seized with apoplexy, and speedily slept in Jesus.

In 1834 the Rev. George H. Rowe and the Rev. John Rattenbury were sent to Macclesfield as Mr. Morgan's colleagues, and both remained there three years. During that period they were graciously allowed to witness and take part in a most glorious revival of religion. It was one of the most extensive that the Circuit was ever favoured with, and has seldom been surpassed at any time or in any place. Week after week, through the entire period, with very rare exceptions, there were in the chapels, and elsewhere, signal tokens of the Divine presence.

Among the numerous cases of conversion, one was attended by circumstances which excited considerable attention. One Sabbath evening the wife of the Mayor of Macclesfield was kneeling at the Communion-rail as

a penitent. She had special difficulties to overcome. Her father had been a preacher among the Socinians, and she had been trained to regard Jesus of Nazareth as a mere creature. Her early training would in all probability have prevailed to the close of life had the conflict within her been only one of opinion and intellect. But she had been led by the Good Spirit to discern her sinfulness. She deeply felt that she needed deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. One "mighty to save" must interpose on her behalf, or she would be undone. She was induced to go to the Methodist chapel, and there she heard that Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, once crucified, now glorified, was able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. That message would meet her case,—if it were true; but, from childhood, she had been warned against such doctrine as false. Her distress, however, increased, and one Sunday evening she knelt as described, seeking mercy from God. The Rev. John Rattenbury, who had been preaching, endeavoured to direct her to God through Christ. The struggle within the heart of the troubled one was severe, and the darkness dreadful. The Lord Jesus had declared, and with special reference to such cases of perplexity on that very topic:—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John vii. 17.) The pleading penitent was determined to do God's will. The truth was revealed to her heart. She was enabled to cast herself on God's mercy through the Sacrifice offered on Calvary, and, being filled with peace and joy through believing, at once began to praise her Redeemer. "Now I know," she said, "that Christ is Divine,—truly God; for He has taken away my burden and saved my soul."

This circumstance was sufficient in itself to excite public attention; but this was not all. It so happened that the Mayor's ball was about to be held, and it had been confidently expected that Mrs. F—— would take a prominent part in the dancing and other gaieties. She, however, at once perceived that for her to do so would be entirely inconsistent with her profession of Christian discipleship. Her husband was much grieved; and, when he found that his expostulations were in vain, he regarded himself as disgraced before the Corporation and burgesses, and was greatly exasperated. Mrs. F——, however, remained firm, resolved to retain that "pearl of great price" which she had happily found. After a time she was appointed a class-leader, and, in that capacity, earnestly endeavoured to bring others to the Saviour who had done so much for her, and to induce the members of her class to follow Jesus in the way, walking closely in His footsteps.

A remarkable deliverance of a Christian disciple from drowning occurred about this time, and deserves to be recorded. Mr. Rattenbury was one week-evening appointed to preach in a village at some distance from Macclesfield. He generally preferred to walk alone, but on this occasion was accompanied by Mr. Wood, whose son, Mr. Samuel Wood, now works for Christ, in Macclesfield, in the Sabbath-school, and as a class-leader. The night was very dark, and, when they had walked some distance, they called at a friend's house and borrowed a lantern. In two respects, therefore, as he afterwards gratefully called to mind, Mr. Rattenbury was unusually circumstanced: he had a companion and a light. Had he then been asked why he had desired either, he could not have satisfactorily replied. The friends, however, proceeded onward, and had almost

reached the preaching-room when they heard cries of distress. The voice seemed to come from a brook which flowed near the road, not generally large but then swollen. Mr. Rattenbury managed to reach the edge of the water, and perceived by the light of the lantern, with which Mr. Wood had followed, that a woman was struggling in the stream. The bottom and the sides were slippery, and the current strong, so that, though the water was not very deep, the poor woman without speedy help must have perished. The two friends succeeded eventually in getting her out of the peril, and assisting her up the slippery bank. Had it not been for the lighted lantern, it seemed probable that she must have been drowned though they had heard her cries; and, possibly, they also might have been drowned in the endeavour to rescue her.

When the danger was over they ascertained that the rescued woman lived in a cottage at no great distance; and that, coming to the preaching, and having to cross the brook by a plank bridge, she had, in consequence of the darkness and the slipperiness of the bank, lost her foothold, and fallen down into the water. They lighted her across the narrow bridge, led her home, and then went to the preaching-room. After the service the friends again crossed the stream to inquire whether the woman was seriously injured by her fall and peril. They could however ascertain very little. Her husband, who was evidently an ungodly and brutal man, had been reproaching her for "going among the Methodists," and declared to her deliverers that had she been drowned it would have "served her right."

Notwithstanding opposition of various kinds, the work of the Lord rapidly advanced. There were those outside the Church, some of whom were vulgar, and

others refined, who manifested the enmity of the carnal mind to spiritual religion; and there were still within the Church some who too readily listened to the harangues, or read the appeals, of disappointed and reckless men. But God's servants proceeded with their task of proclaiming their Master and offering the great salvation. The Lord was with them, and the number of disciples was greatly augmented.

Bollington had shared in the gracious shower, and one result of this was that the friends there began in earnest to prepare for a new chapel. The erection of this will be recorded in a subsequent chapter. But we would here note that while Mr. Thomas Oliver and Mr. Rattenbury were toiling hard in endeavouring to procure subscriptions, many of the mill-hands statedly gave something, each pay-day, for this purpose. Arrangements were made for the gathering of these sums, small but many, at each payment of wages.

Mr. Rowe was spared to enter on the forty-second year of his ministry. He was during the whole of that time faithful to God, and diligent in his sacred calling. Early in the year 1850 his health failed, so that he was not able to preach. Yet he was still permitted to do much for God, and gladly did it. During the last fortnight of his life he visited nearly all the members of the Maidstone Society, most affectionately urging them to seek for an increase of the holiness which constitutes preparation for death and meetness for heaven. On Sunday, March 3rd, he administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This was his last act of ministerial service. During his concluding prayer he was seized with apoplexy, but was enabled to bear public testimony to the inward peace which he enjoyed, and which the solemn circumstances in which he was placed rather

strengthened than disturbed. Before the friends could convey him from the chapel, he said, several times, "Do not be alarmed; I am not. All is right" Once he added, "My oft-repeated prayer is answered: 'My body with my charge lay down.'" In less than twenty-four hours after the seizure he had entered the heavenly rest.

His colleague, the Rev. John Rattenbury, still dwells among us. His devoted and successful services need not to be here enumerated,—there are so many who have gracious reason to speak of them. In 1861 he was elected President. In due time, no doubt, record will be made of his zealous endeavours to promote the triumphs of Christ's kingdom. Succeeding generations of Methodists will read of these. The present generation is acquainted with them. The three years he spent in Macclesfield was a period of great blessing, following close on other times of great enlargement. The Circuit was during several years specially favoured; and the Lord's cause is at the present largely sustained by some who were at that time induced to yield themselves to the Saviour, and to the Church by the will of God. May such days of grace be renewed at Macclesfield, and everywhere.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SECOND BOLLINGTON CHAPEL. 1837.

IN the year 1837 a new chapel, larger and more attractive in appearance than the former, was opened for Divine worship at Bollington. It covered the former site and some additional land. At present it is regarded as very unpretentious in appearance, although neat. But so lately as 1837, when it was opened, several of the old disciples, who had long worshipped in the upper room over the bark-mill, and who had rejoiced when they removed thence, out of the way of the effluvia from the tan-yard, to the new chapel on Knowles Green, feared that pride and worldly conformity had now gained an entrance among the Methodists, and that the glory was departing, if indeed it had not already gone.

Three years before the new Methodist chapel was erected a church was built by the Parliamentary Commissioners, at a cost of £4,002; and in the same year, and not far from the church, a Romanist chapel was raised. Thus, after the Methodists had during some twenty-seven years furnished the only place of worship in the village, others began to think of providing buildings in which to worship and teach. In more recent times the "Primitive Methodists," and still later

the Congregationalists, have followed the example thus set them.

When the new Methodist chapel was built, several years had elapsed since the death of Mr. Peter Lomas. A marble tablet was, however, placed therein to commemorate his excellencies, and the aid rendered by him in the establishment of Methodism in the village. His house was long regarded as the home of the preachers who visited Bollington to declare the words of Life. But he was called to his rest August 31st, 1822, while as yet the chapel he had assisted to raise was deemed amply sufficient for the necessities of the Methodists.

Mary Ward, good "old Molly," still lingered on earth. She was then eighty-four years old, and was still to remain nine more, making apparent the power of vital godliness to keep its possessor happy amidst the decays and pains of extreme old age. In daily life, as well as in class, band-meeting, and love-feast, her testimony for Christ was explicit.

But during the thirty years in which the Methodists of Bollington worshipped in their first chapel, God had raised up men whose resources were amply sufficient to build a commodious sanctuary, and at the same time to assist the cause of God in all its departments at home and abroad. Perhaps few villages could furnish more striking instances of the truth of that Divine declaration: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim iv. 8.) Methodism would indeed have ample resources if every family which has been prospered, under God, by its agency, devoted even a moderate amount of its inherited wealth to its benevolent purposes. There are thousands of families possessing abundance, whose parents were kept from the snares of death, and

from the follies which would certainly have impoverished their children, by Christ's religion in the form of Methodism. There are some noble examples of gratitude ; there are some who seek to strengthen Methodism, that others, in this land and in distant lands, may be taught to prize the godliness which proved so advantageous to their ancestors, and which they themselves have learned to value. May the number who thus show themselves grateful be increased.

The Mr. Martin Swindells who was among the leading friends in Bollington when the new chapel was built, and whose features were depicted in the Centenary painting two or three years afterwards, was born in Macclesfield, July 12th, 1784. Though he was the eldest child, his parents consented to his living with his grandfather, who at that time kept "the Eagle and Child" tavern, near St. Michael's church, and also officiated at the church as clerk and bell-ringer. Little Martin never lost a distinct recollection of being taken to the church by his grandfather, morning and evening, when a bell had to be tolled. He assisted, or believed he assisted, his grandsire in this operation. The liveliest remembrance of his home appears to have been, that he was occasionally allowed to ride on the horse employed in turning the machinery in his father's small cotton-mill.

Circumstances led to the father's removal to Stockport, and little Martin was taken thither with the family. The father chiefly prided himself on his loyalty, declaring himself firmly attached to "Church and King," drinking to the prosperity of these, and the confusion of all their enemies, whenever he had opportunity to do so in liquors which suited his taste. He does not appear to have taken any great care in the training of his

children. They were chiefly warned to avoid Radicals and Dissenters: if they went to church all the better.

One Sabbath morning Martin, now a big lad, went out rather early. He was met in the street by a youth with whom he had formed a slight acquaintance. After brief salutation this youth asked Martin to go with him to school. This he declined to do; for school was not to his liking. As the youth was urgent, he inquired what they did there. This was explained. The youth mentioned singing, and declared that it was "first rate." Martin was of musical turn, and this seemed attractive. So he at length consented to go. When they had approached the room he again hesitated, for it looked neither like a church nor a national school. But those inside were already singing, and the voices sounded pleasant. So in the lads went. A few more verses, and all knelt down. A plainly-dressed man began to pray. Martin could recognise neither Collect nor Litany, nor any of the well-known phrases to which he had been accustomed. So he ventured to open his eyes and take a peep. To his amazement he discovered that the man had no more book than he had surplice. After prayer the lessons began. The school was a small affair, chiefly dependent on this one godly man: but he was of a right sort. Before noon young Martin was greatly attached to him, and had become impressed by the truth. Dread of a thrashing, however, now began to mingle with his pleasure. If he had returned home early, no question would have been asked. Absence from church would most likely have not occasioned severe rebuke. But Martin's father did not choose to have any of his family arrangements interfered with, and Martin had stayed at the school until after the church service concluded. But, worst of

all, the school teacher was a "Methodist." So the lad went home trembling, yet resolved, if compelled to explain, to speak the truth. He dared not promise to go to the school again, though urged to do so: how to avert or endure the penalty already incurred was the uppermost thought. The youth entered the room and took his place as quietly as possible; but the father noticed his entrance, and at once asked, "Where have you been, Martin?" The latter tremblingly answered that he had heard some good singing. This he thought the most likely circumstance to soften the transgression in his father's estimation. "Where have you heard it, lad?" All had to be now explained. To Martin's amazement and delight, the father seemed to be in special good humour; he uttered no injunction concerning the future, and scarcely a grumble respecting the truancy. The lad, at the time, believed that the deliverance was chiefly owing to the singing having been made prominent, and to his father's astonishment at the description of the prayer without any book, and his surprise at the assurance that the teacher prayed for "good King George" most heartily. In after years, Martin Swindells discerned the hand of God in the restraint laid on his father at this time.

In a short time the youth, then about eighteen years old, was numbered among the Methodists and enjoying God's pardoning and renewing grace. He was, for a time, led to Manchester and found employment there. Every Saturday night, however, he returned to the home at Stockport and gave into his mother's hand all that he could spare of his wages, and rejoiced to receive his mother's blessing.

Martin Swindells married early, considering the circumstances in which he was placed; but he had been

guided by the God whom he was serving to a happy choice. Mary, his bride, proved a help and joy to him so long as she was spared to share his toils, his trials, and his successes. After his marriage, and with the responsibilities of family-life upon him, he worked in Stockport for some time for twenty-one shillings a week, yet found opportunity both to toil and give in the cause of Christ. One day, while he was thus working for small remuneration, the Rev. J. Barber, then stationed at Stockport, who had been President of the Conference twice, in 1807, and in 1815, came to him, and said, "Martin, we have been talking about you, and have come to the conclusion that you must enter into business for yourself." "That might be desirable, Mr. Barber, if I had sufficient skill and plenty of money to begin with." "Well, you have the skill, and there are friends in Stockport who will find the capital." Mr. Swindells was deeply affected. Years afterwards, when narrating the conversation and its results, tears of gratitude and love flowed down the cheeks of the good man. He felt, at the time when Mr. Barber made the offer, burdened by the goodness of God and His people. Mr. Barber perceived this, and playfully put the case in another aspect, so as to relieve him somewhat:—"The fact is, Martin, we shall want a pillar for Methodism in this place soon, and we have concluded that, by God's blessing, you will prosper, and then you will become what we need." Thus it proved. Mr. Swindells was, during some years, a "pillar" in Stockport, and, afterwards, was such during many years elsewhere. In 1820 he removed to Ingersley, to start the mill there. He opened his kitchen for public worship, and blessed results were vouchsafed. He found it necessary on one occasion, or more, to stop the

machinery that a prayer-meeting might be held in the mill, so many of "the hands" were seeking the great salvation.

In 1823 Mr. Swindells removed to Manchester, to superintend the building and establishment of a mill. While residing in Manchester, he was connected with Grosvenor Street chapel, and assisted in the erection of Oxford Road and Ancoats chapels. With his attached friend Mr. Chappell, and others, he helped in beginning the Sabbath-School carried on under Oxford Road chapel.

In 1830 the partnership between Mr. Swindells and Messrs. James and John Fernley was dissolved; when the former removed to Bollington, and carried on the Ingersley and Rainow mills on his own account. There he threw himself with his usual ardour into the work of God, and was the instrument of doing much good. Before leaving Manchester, the family had suffered much painful affliction. One beloved daughter, Judith, had been called to the heavenly world. But the greatest trial of all to Mr. Swindells occurred when, on November 18th, 1839, his beloved partner, hereafter to be mentioned, was taken from him. He struggled to be resigned to the Lord's will, but found that cup of sorrow to be bitter indeed. After a season, however, he so far obtained control over his feelings that he could fulfil his daily tasks, and try to bless those around him as heretofore. In less than four years after the death of his dear wife he was summoned to share her joy. He died in holy triumph: the Lord whom he had long served was nigh. The dying saint passed away exclaiming, "O death, where is thy sting?"

Mrs. Swindells, as already intimated, had previously entered the heavenly rest. Of her varied excellencies

those who knew her best long spoke with loving warmth. Before she had completed her thirtieth year, while in Manchester, she was apparently about to die. At that time her soul was very happy in God, yet was she exceedingly wishful to be spared a little longer. Martin, her eldest surviving son, and his sister Anne were sufficiently old to be entrusted to the care of their father and other kin. But she had other children who needed such service as none but a mother could fully render. Still it seemed to all that the decree had gone forth that she must leave her earthly home. The medical attendant had intimated this to the family, and to the sufferer herself. At that juncture the invalid set apart a special season for prayer. She asked for "ten years" longer, that she might try to mould the character of her children according to God's will. She was fully satisfied before she left the Mercy-seat that her prayer had been answered. The next day the doctor said to Mr. Swindells, "There is a marvellous change in your dear wife. I think some means have been employed without my knowledge. Do not be afraid to tell me. I only wish her to be spared to you." From that time she gained strength; and she looked forward to 1839, as the probable period of her death. And this it really proved to be.

One evening, while they resided at Pott Hall, an attorney who lived in Macclesfield was seated with them. He had gone to speak kind words to a young lady then visiting at the Hall; but, at the time referred to, was talking with Mr. and Mrs. Swindells, no other person being in the room. The visitor, Mr. H——, was one who highly respected Methodism without being a Methodist. Possibly the worthy couple had been urging him to complete decision for God, when he

abruptly asked:—"Did either of you ever know a Methodist of the third generation?" They were startled by the inquiry. Possibly the visitor did not know, or had forgotten at the moment, that Mrs. Swindells was the daughter of a Methodist who had walked closely with her God. As Miss Swindells, Anne, afterwards Mrs. Brooke, was at that time a member of her father's class, and manifesting the excellence which ripened into more than ordinary saintliness, and as their much-loved Judith had been, while they were in Manchester, a true Methodist until taken to the glorious home above, there was no need to inquire concerning Methodists of the third generation. Possibly, however, when putting the question, Mr. H —— thought of his host and hostess as the earliest Methodists of the family. Mrs. Swindells was no doubt reminded by the question of other of their children yet unsaved. Beyond everything else she desired that her loved ones should be consecrated to the Saviour, and ardently wished that they might select the Church of her sainted mother and of her own early choice. She, in her turn, startled her visitor by the devout vehemence of her reply:—"Oh, Mr. H——, I should be distressed beyond measure,—more than I can express,—if I thought that my children would not be Methodists, and good ones too, and my grand-children also."

When the ten added years were drawing to a close, Mrs. Swindells began to set her house in order. Without needlessly referring to the subject to those around her, she arranged for her anticipated departure, so that husband, and children, and friends, might be spared unnecessary trouble. At that time she said to her son:—"Martin, I want you to promise me two things before I leave you. You must distinctly assent

to both for the sake of your mother." "I will try, mother." "I believe you will. I am greatly troubled that you have not yet yielded your heart to the Saviour. That is a great sorrow to your mother; you know not how bitter that grief is, Martin, but you must solemnly promise me, first, that you will never forsake Methodism itself. Your parents were thus led to the Saviour, and I hope you yet will be. You owe much to it. You will never forsake the chapel nor the cause. Do you assent?" "I do, mother!" "Second, You will always treat the preachers kindly. They have often much that is unpleasant to endure from ignorant and bad people. You will always be a friend to those servants of Christ. Do you assent, Martin?" "I do, mother." "God bless you, my lad. I hope the Lord will soon save your soul, and that you will meet your mother in heaven." These two promises were faithfully kept by the son. Twelve years indeed elapsed after his mother's death before that child of many prayers yielded his heart to the Saviour. In the summer of 1851 he was brought, in a very remarkable manner, to seek God's pardoning and renewing grace. The change was so great, and brought about in so wonderful a way, as to excite general attention. From that time he devoted himself to God's work with an ardour something like that of his father. But, during the twelve years between his mother's death and his conversion, as during preceding and subsequent years, he endeavoured to be a friend to Methodist preachers and to help forward the cause of Christ.

The godly mother was spared to see the new chapel opened: during two years she frequently worshipped therein. She was then admitted to the glorious City of God. On November 18th, 1839, she walked in great

feebleness from her chair by the fireside to her bed, repeating the verse;—

> "Jesus, in Thy great Name I go
> To conquer death my final foe!
> And when I quit this cumbrous clay,
> And soar on angels' wings away,
> My soul the second death defies,
> And reigns eternal in the skies."

After this expression of her hope she soon closed her eyes in sleep, and awoke no more on earth. Her waking was amid the brightness and rapture of the New Jerusalem.

Mr. Thomas Oliver was another Methodist in Bollington whom the Lord had greatly prospered, and who was able and willing both to give and do much towards the erection of the new chapel. We may distinguish him as the third of that name and family attached to Methodism. He has been succeeded by a fourth of the name in lineal descent. It may not be uninteresting to glance at the pedigree.

Thomas Oliver the first welcomed the Methodists to Longnor when no other persons were willing to do so. He had long been regarded as a stanch Churchman, yet was a stranger to vital godliness. His sons from mere curiosity travelled some distance to hear these "wandering preachers." They eventually made such a report to their father that he authorised them to invite a preacher for once to his house at Longnor. He was favourably impressed, and would hear them again. He became truly converted, was firm amid much persecution, and died happy in Jesus, September, 1785, aged eighty.

Thomas Oliver the second was one of the sons just mentioned, whose report induced their father to invite the Methodist preachers to Longnor. Considering that

now, during more than a century, the family has been extending a generous hospitality to Christ's servants in general, and Methodist preachers in particular, and that during that hundred years there has never been wanting a Thomas Oliver to welcome such to his home, it is a noteworthy circumstance that this Thomas the second opened his association with Methodists by appropriating to himself, in a frolic, a supper prepared for a Methodist preacher. With his brother James, afterwards a most zealous local-preacher, Thomas had gone one Saturday evening to hear in a cottage a sermon from an Itinerant preacher. They had never before been on such an errand, and were much more inclined for fun than devotion. It so happened that the supper intended for the preacher had been placed near the expiring embers on the hearth. Tea and coffee were luxuries as yet unknown in such cottages. The kind hostess had provided an ale-posset for her guest, and the spoon had been placed in it ready for use. A group of young people were collected around the hearth during the service. The suggestion was made that it would be "grand sport" to dispose of the posset: so the party carefully concealed Thomas Oliver while he quietly drank it up. The mischievous youngsters left the cottage, when the preaching was over, exulting in the anticipated bewilderment of the preacher and his hostess. One of the young women who took part in this prank was named Hannah Thompson. She afterwards became mistress of that very house, and lived to see her hundredth year. Thomas Oliver, in a very short time after this mischief, helped to persuade his father to invite the preachers to their home; and thus in that family began hospitality towards Christ's servants which has already endured more than a century.

Thomas Oliver the third was born in Longnor, in 1786. When between two and three years old he had a very remarkable escape. In the depth of winter, and at the midnight hour, his father's premises were discovered to be on fire. Mrs. Oliver was sleeping over the room where the fire commenced. Baffled in her attempt to make her way down stairs, she returned to the room, still carrying her babe in her arms, and, having succeeded in wrenching some iron bars from the lead, opened the window, threw the infant into a snow-drift beneath, and leaped by its side. A servant man, who must have been a hero though a servitor, was forcing his way through the flames to an attic, where he knew gunpowder was kept, when he stumbled over the apprentice lad in a state of insensibility. The man seized the unconscious youth and pushed him through a window, so that he fell on the same drift which had lately received his mistress and her babe. Having thrown out the gunpowder, the man was returning amid smoke and flames when a child's cry arrested his attention. The child was Thomas, who had been sleeping with his nurse, and was supposed to be in her care. She had, however, been so terrified as to escape without giving any thought to her charge. The noble-minded man laid hold of the little boy, and made his way down the stairs, which fell in almost as soon as he had passed. Mr. Oliver, formerly Thomas of the posset, found at the close of the night that the flames had destroyed nearly the whole of his worldly goods, but that no life had been lost. His wife, children, widowed mother, servants, were all spared. So, like the father of the Wesleys, in a similar scene of wintry desolation, and of ruin effected by fire, he knelt down and praised God for His mercy to him.

When about fifteen years of age, Thomas the third yielded his heart fully to God, and joined the Methodist Society at Longnor. While very young he was appointed leader of a class; and he did not disappoint the expectations of those who placed such confidence in him. When about twenty years of age he removed to Stockport, where he devoted his energies to the cause of God as well as to business. There he became acquainted with Mr. Swindells, with whom he was afterwards so much associated in Bollington. To that village Mr. Oliver was by the kind providence of God led to remove. He there became a cotton-manufacturer, and was blessed with considerable success. He married a daughter of Mr. Peter Lomas, who had granted the land for the erection of the Methodist chapel. Thus, when the time arrived for the building of a chapel of a superior order, and more spacious dimensions, Mr. Oliver was prepared to do a generous part.

He was spared to worship in the new chapel for twenty-one years, and was then translated from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly. During fifty-seven years he had been a consistent follower of the Lord Jesus. In the various offices of Leader, Steward, Trustee, and Treasurer to several Connexional Funds, he performed the duties assigned to him with great diligence and general satisfaction. The source of his spiritual vigour was apparent: he was a man of prayer. The means of grace were evidently precious to him. Though he had a thorough relish for business, and great tact therein, he allowed nothing which could be set aside to prevent his attendance on the week-evening services. He was thus "planted in the house of the Lord," and flourished accordingly.

On the evening of February 24th, 1858, he was

detained in his counting-house a few minutes longer than he had expected to be. It would have been easy to linger there longer, for the business was urgent. It would have been pleasant to have turned his face homeward, for the night was very cold and stormy, and he was in his seventy-second year. But he hastened through the storm towards the house of God. The service was to be conducted by the Rev. J. A. Armstrong. When Mr. Oliver reached the place, and was prepared to take his part in worship, the congregation were singing the verse,

> "Sion enjoys her Monarch's love,
> Secure against the threat'ning hour;
> Nor can her firm foundation move,
> Built on His faithfulness and power."

While they were in the act of kneeling down for prayer, Mr. Oliver was observed to stagger, and fall down backward. Those in the vestry, where the service was being held, sought to assist him. But he needed no human aid. All that was left among his friends on earth was the lifeless body: the deathless spirit had already entered the Temple above. Enjoying his "Monarch's love," he had been "secure" in that "threat'ning hour," and, without seeing death, had entered on the enjoyment of endless life. But he had not lived in vain. Mr. Oliver left behind him two sons who were then fast becoming "pillars" in the Church of God. A fourth Thomas, as well as his brother William, lives to sustain the cause of God in the village and Circuit. There is reason to hope that a fifth generation will tread faithfully in the steps of their godly fathers.

When the new chapel at Bollington was erected, there was another disciple living, of about the same age

as those two worthy men just mentioned. Ralph Clayton was about one year older than Mr. Swindells, and three years older than Mr. Oliver. He had not gained worldly wealth as these had done, yet was he deeply interested in the completion of the chapel, and was, in his way, a chief support of the Methodist cause. He was the son of that Edward Clayton in whose house the first Bollington class was formed, and the old family Bible had come into his possession. "Mighty in the Scriptures" was Ralph. He was not uncommonly spoken of as "a walking concordance." But he was not a mere concordance: his heart was right with God, and rich with Divine grace. When a little boy, he was often taken to hear the Rev. D. Simpson, but at that time remained undecided. When about eighteen years old he was prostrated by fever, and greatly alarmed concerning his soul. While reading in the Methodist Hymn-book he was enabled to cast his sins at the foot of the cross, and was filled with peace and joy. He then joined the Society at once, and endeavoured to become of some service. He was one of the first teachers in the Bollington Sunday-school, and used to walk a considerable distance to conduct his class when he was appointed a class-leader. His Bible he read diligently, and greatly prized its lessons. He often employed in reference to it the words of David concerning the sword of Goliath, "There is none like it."

Ralph Clayton was never eager after gain, and possessed little aptitude for worldly business. In later life misfortunes befel him, and he had to remove to a smaller house than that which he had formerly occupied. He went about the country selling such wares as he could carry in a tin box or a basket. But he had, notwithstanding his toil and poverty, much comfort.

After wearisome journeying he repaired to the room which served as workshop, kitchen, dining-room, parlour, and library. A few minutes served to eat his frugal supper. Then came the luxurious feast of the day. He had a selection of favourite authors; and with one of these he would hold lengthened intercourse. At length the Book of books would be devoutly opened, and Ralph held blessed fellowship with the King of glory. Many used to see him towards evening moving slowly and wearily towards Bollington, apparently overburdened by his box carried beneath the folds of his well-worn cloak, and they pitied him. Some have curiously and reverently peered in on him, when they occasionally passed his window about the midnight hour, and have wonderingly seen the old man's countenance lit up with unearthly joy, while the Bible lay open before him, and the embers were dark in the grate, and the candle was dying in the socket. His latest sufferings were exceptionally severe; but, amid the most violent of them, he was accustomed to exclaim:—"I am not forsaken either by God or His people."

These may serve as specimens of true disciples who had been raised up by the grace of God in Bollington. They are few among the many of that village whose names are written among the living in Jerusalem. God had immediately previous to 1837 sent "showers of blessing" once again in the Macclesfield Circuit, and Bollington had shared in the gracious rain. Room was needed for those who flocked to the house of prayer, and encouragement was given to those whose hearts were right with God. So they said to each other, "Let us arise and build;" and God prospered the work of their hands.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MODERN DAYS. 1837—1874.

WE have now reached a period comparatively recent. Many of those who at this time were active Methodists in the Macclesfield Circuit still survive, and they might not be pleased if their respective services and performances were either criticised or commended. Our remaining notes must therefore be both select and brief.

The Rev. Alexander Strachan entered the City above in 1865. In 1837 he was appointed to Macclesfield, and in 1838 took the Superintendency. In 1839, while still Superintendent, he met his brethren in the District-Meeting at Congleton, and was requested by them to remain a few days in that town, that he might take down from the lips of the venerable George Lowe some of his many recollections of early Methodism. Mr. Lowe was then eighty-nine years old, of retentive memory, and his understanding was still clear, yet he had not committed to writing one incident of his life, nor one fact observed by him. To the request made to Mr. Strachan, and Mr. Lowe's compliance therewith, the present volume is somewhat indebted.

Mr. Strachan states that when Mr. Lowe was nearly ninety years old, he retained in a marvellous degree the power of song; and adds that he heard him, in company

with Mr. T. Allen, sing "Jacob's Well" with a "precision, pathos, and effect, which would not have disgraced the choir of a cathedral." He also records that Mr. Lowe, while in "the full work," everywhere endeavoured to improve congregational singing. "Having acquired a competent knowledge of the science of music in early life, and possessing a soft, copious, and commanding voice, he frequently conducted this part of Divine worship himself. While thus employed at a band-meeting one night, he raised a favourite tune, the bass of which was very difficult, and could be sung to his satisfaction by only one individual present on that occasion. That person was Edward Clayton; who was much deformed, and very diminutive in size, but whose voice combined the rare qualities of sweetness, fulness, and depth of tone. As they approached the most difficult part of the tune, Mr. Lowe exclaimed, 'Now, Ned, mind that low note.' 'Ned' felt the compliment, threw his head upon his shoulder, and with equal complacency and power, brought out the 'low note' to the high gratification of the attentive and discriminating ear of Mr. Lowe."

In the Memoir of Mr. Lowe compiled by Mr. Strachan, during his last year in Macclesfield, there are many effective glimpses of early Methodism in different parts of the country. Mr. Strachan was wise in winning souls. For some years prior to his death he frequently endured excruciating pain, which he bore with Christian fortitude. At the close he said:—"I know whom I have believed: my trust is in the Lord Jesus. He is precious; Christ is my hope and my all."

It would be easy to linger on the several excellencies and triumphs of ministers and laymen associated with Macclesfield, but concerning these worthies of later times

our sketches can only be very slight. The Rev. Israel Holgate was a colleague of Mr. Strachan in Macclesfield during three years. His character was unblemished, and his conduct exemplary. In his sixtieth year he was summoned to the heavenly home. In his sick-room scenes of extraordinary Christian tranquillity, dignity, and triumph were frequently witnessed by his family and brethren. On one occasion, when he thought himself dying, he firmly grasped the hand of a colleague, and solemnly said, "Preach Christ; preach Him always; preach Him for everything. I am altogether in His hands." Then, his countenance brightening with a beautiful radiancy, he exclaimed,

> "Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
> More than all in Thee I find."

The Rev. William Bird spent two years in Macclesfield as Superintendent of the Circuit. As in other places in which he laboured, he is remembered by the raciness of his sayings, both in the pulpit and out of it. He was a Supernumerary for some years, but was spared to see the sixtieth year of his ministry.

During the last year of Mr. Bird's Superintendency, the Rev. Joseph Meek resided in Macclesfield as a Supernumerary. This servant of God was well known and highly esteemed during his public life, and has been favoured beyond most by having sons who have long been "pillars" in the Church of their father: In Manchester, Preston, Wigan, and Macclesfield, his name has been made honourable by the conduct of his children. Methodism has been largely sustained and extended by the offspring of its ministers, sons and daughters; but few names, however, once on the school-roll at Kingswood or Woodhouse Grove, have become better known in Methodism than that of "Meek,"

though no son of Joseph Meek became a minister. The name of Mr. John Meek must ever have a place in the annals of Macclesfield Methodism. Joseph Meek entered the Wesleyan ministry in the year 1800, and discharged its duties for thirty-nine years, when failure of health compelled him to retire from the full work of a Circuit. During ten years, as a Supernumerary, he did what he could. In his declining years the consolations of religion were richly vouchsafed to him, imparting to his demeanour a serenity and sweetness most attractive and impressive. When symptoms of approaching dissolution appeared he was graciously sustained. The joy of the Lord was his strength; and in the most edifying manner possible he bore his testimony, not only to the goodness and fidelity of that God whom for nearly half a century he had served in the gospel of His Son, but also to the value of those important truths which had been the topics of his public ministry, and the consolations of which, in the prospect of death, he abundantly experienced. He died in great peace, September 7th, 1849, in the seventy-fourth year of his age, and the fiftieth of his ministry.

We will retrace our path a few steps to mark the final triumph of a Methodist, faithful to God and esteemed by God's people, though not in the ministry. At the time Macclesfield was made a Circuit town, George Brocklehurst was a little lad living with his parents. George, soon afterwards, had a strong desire to serve the Lord, and also to improve his mind, but had no one to help him; and hence, for a season, these desires passed away. Eventually he was induced to go to the "new church" to hear the Rev. D. Simpson. He was deeply impressed by what he heard. At length he availed himself of the opportunity kindly afforded by

Mr. Simpson, and disclosed to the godly clergyman his spiritual solicitudes. He was urged to join the Methodists, as the most likely way to secure the help he needed. George was unwilling, yet at last consented. He did not find peace at once, but after a time was enabled to believe on the Saviour, and was filled with joy. He soon became a Local-preacher, and, in that capacity, toiled hard in the Macclesfield Circuit. He lived to see Buxton divided from Macclesfield, and Kettleshulme, where he resided, assigned to Buxton. In the Buxton Circuit he was also a Leader, Trustee, and Circuit-steward. A few days before he died he declared:—"With respect to temporal things I want for nothing; my kind family do all that can be done. And in respect to spiritual ones, I can truly say,—

> 'The opening heavens around me shine
> With beams of sacred bliss.'"

He died in peace in September, 1836, at Kettleshulme.

About three years afterwards, August 30th, 1839, a mother in Israel, Mrs. Betty Longden, departed this life, at Rainow. Soon after her marriage, her husband and she opened their house at Hooley Hay for preaching. During about forty years both travelling and local-preachers ministered there, and invariably received a hearty welcome. Mrs. Longden was a woman of strong sense, and great decision of character. Throughout her long life she suffered more than Christian disciples ordinarily do, but this only resulted in her greater spirituality of mind. No one ever saw her, even in the darkest hour, without a strong trust in the Lord and an ardent desire for full salvation. In 1833 her husband was summoned to the heavenly rest. She was cheered by a well-grounded assurance that her much-loved

partner was with God, and she set herself with greater earnestness to finish her task and secure an entire meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light." The latest weeks of her life were distinguished by abounding suffering, "joy in the Holy Ghost" being equally abundant. A life which for more than half a century was marked by consistent piety was closed by a peaceful death.

On October 5th, 1840, a Christian disciple was taken from Kerridge to the Zion above, concerning whom the Methodists of that neighbourhood had cherished the hope that she would be spared for many years. Miss Nancy Holland had long given evidence of more than ordinary devotedness to the service of her Redeemer. Her daily life was so exemplary and kindly that her efforts to promote the spiritual good of those around were very influential. After her decease it was discovered from memoranda she left that the source of her eminent piety was, as might have been expected, intercourse with God beyond that which is generally maintained by professors of religion. Five times a day she retired for secret prayer,—early in the morning, at nine o'clock, at noon, at six, and when going to rest. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matt. vi. 6.) Her last illness was sudden and unexpected. When it seemed to her fellow-servants in Christ's household that she had become fitted for honourable and successful service on earth, the Lord called her to the nobler employments of heaven. She bore her sufferings with signal patience, and when informed that her end was nigh, calmly replied,

"My Father's hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best."

Just before her departure she repeatedly and joyously declared, "Jesus is precious;—Jesus is precious;" the heavenly brightness of her countenance making it apparent to all present how fully she realized what she said. So, in her thirty-second year, Nancy Holland closed her earthly pilgrimage.

At the Conference of 1843 the Rev. Robert Jackson, who had previously travelled two years in the Circuit, was appointed to the Superintendency, with Thomas Hardy and Charles Clay as his colleagues. During that year a very large number of persons were converted to God, and added to the Societies.

In 1845, while Thomas Harris was Superintendent, and Charles Clay the preacher resident at Bollington, the friends in the latter place once again engaged in building. An undenominational school had in very early times been erected in this village, and, as in Macclesfield, so here, the Methodists took a leading part in the undertaking. When, afterwards, a much larger structure was raised for a similar purpose, Methodists were among the most liberal contributors and active promoters. But difference of views on the question of what is suitable to be taught on the Holy Sabbath, and on other subjects, eventually led the Bollington Methodists to wish for premises exclusively under their own direction. At a cost of £2,000, commodious buildings were erected. In those premises, three week-day schools, for boys, girls, and infants, have now been maintained for many years, the burden of the expense having long chiefly rested on two or three liberal and honoured supporters of them.

Though little reference is made in these sketches

to any, however excellent, who are still living, mention may be made of a worthy couple whom God has privileged both with the ability to contribute largely to His cause and the disposition so to do. The declaration, "Them that honour Me I will honour," has been exemplified in their history. Mr. David Holland regarded it as proper, in his circumstances, to promise a thousand pounds to the Metropolitan Chapel Building Fund, and, within twelve months, to promise a similar sum to the new chapel at Macclesfield. Though not seeking to lay up treasure on earth, Mr. Holland cannot be regarded as a poor man. We refer to his name that we may glorify his Lord. Both he and Mrs. Holland began life in a lowly position, but they gave their hearts to the Saviour when young, and began to devise liberal things for Him according to their means. So soon as they were married they encouraged each other to do as much as practicable for their blessed Master. When the Methodist Connexion was sorely shaken in 1834, and the Macclesfield Society was thereby endangered, Mr. Holland was in business for himself, though not in so large a way as afterwards. At a meeting of missionary-collectors the minister present was pained to hear one, and then others, state that they did not purpose taking their boxes or books for the next year. His heart was, however, cheered by the tone in which a gentle voice said, "I should much like to have a box, Sir. We will try to do what we can at our place this year." The speaker was Mrs. David Holland. The result of having a box at "our place" was, that more money was produced from that source at the end of the year than had previously been collected in a year by all the persons who, at least for a season, unhappily listened to the disaffected so far as to "stop the supplies."

Forty years afterwards Mr. Holland, encouraged by his godly wife, they being still spared to each other, took a leading part in the noble contributions of the Centenary school for Missions, and headed the generous and kindly emulation between that school and the one in Mill Street. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Prov. iii. 9, 10.)

On December 20th, 1844, Mr. Thomas Clulow, of Lime Green House, near Macclesfield, finished his earthly sojourn. He gave his heart to the Lord about the same time as some who now (1874) are still spared to toil for Christ, and lay up treasure in heaven. Indeed he was somewhat younger than a few of these. Mr. T. Clulow seemed well qualified for varied usefulness. But it was not the will of the Divine Master that he should have a period of prolonged earthly service. He was permitted to manifest his ability and zeal, during a few years, in various offices, but his health then so far failed that he had to retire to comparative inactivity. But God was with him. "Those also serve who only stand and wait." Shortly before his death he whispered,—

> "We'll praise Him for all that is past,
> And trust Him for all that's to come."

He entered life eternal when he had spent but forty-three years on earth, and some of these in weakness and pain.

In 1851 the Rev. John Rigg was appointed Superintendent of the Macclesfield Circuit. Thirty-seven years before he had been the junior minister, and had found an excellent wife in the person of Miss Clulow. He was in 1851 gladly welcomed by the Methodists of Maccles-

field, and became much attached to them during the three years he spent among them at this time. At the Conference of 1855 he was compelled to retire from full ministerial work, and then selected Macclesfield as his place of residence. But his earthly service was almost over. All that he could do in public ministration was to assist twice at the Lord's Supper. His weakness was extreme, and his sufferings were frequently severe. But it was pleasing to witness his faith and meekness amid all he had to endure. He said:—"O the mercy of God! There is the Blood: I trust in that alone. I feel like a worm; but He careth for me." Thus he rested on God's mercy through Christ until called to paradise.

In 1851 Brunswick chapel was enlarged, at a cost of £1,000; accommodation being made for two hundred and fifty additional hearers. Mr. J. W. Smallwood, Mr. J. Meek, and Mr. D. Holland, were leaders in this enterprise. The Rev. Nehemiah Curnock had been in the Circuit two years, and was remaining a third. The chapel, thus enlarged, was rendered both spacious and well-proportioned.

In 1853, while Mr. Rigg was still Superintendent, the friends at Bollington erected, at a cost of £1,000, a substantial house as the home of the minister resident among them; thus relieving the Circuit funds in perpetuity.

In 1854 the Rev. William Burt was appointed to the Superintendency of the Circuit, and remained in it during three years. This venerable minister had already seen much service and endured considerable hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. In 1816 he was sent to Nova Scotia as a Missionary, and there toiled, or in adjacent and similar regions, for the space

of twelve years. He then entered the work at home. After more than thirty years of additional efficient service, in his native land, he retired to Plymouth as a Supernumerary. But it was his privilege and delight still to work for Christ, and on behalf of precious souls, during the eight years of his residence at Plymouth. As a leader of a class, in visiting the sick, and in occasionally preaching, he served his Master to the end. Through a very lengthened period he had possessed almost uninterrupted health. Hence he felt while at Plymouth the limit assigned by weakness to his exertions to be irksome. But patience was given. He left, at the close, a clear, full, and joyful testimony to the power of the Gospel which he had preached for more than half a century. He slept in Jesus September 15th, 1870.

In 1858, while the Rev. Willson Brailsford was Superintendent, having for his colleagues the Rev. Thomas Kent, Edward Jones, and John A. Armstrong, a new chapel was raised at Langley; but this has been previously mentioned.

In 1862, the Rev. William Hurt being Superintendent, and having as his "helpers" the Revs. W. R. Williams, B. Frankland, B.A., and Alfred J. French, B.A., the Macclesfield Methodists entered on a scheme for the erection of a beautiful chapel at Alderley Edge.

The introduction of Methodism into that neighbourhood is deserving of record. Many years prior to 1862, and before prosperous merchants of Manchester discovered that the locality was suitable for the erection of villas, a worthy farmer invited the Methodists to preach in his house. To this they gladly acceded, and for a little time no difficulty presented itself. Mr. Thomas Brocklehurst was expecting to conduct Divine worship

on a certain Sabbath, as he had promised to do, but was informed by the farmer that it would be useless for him to journey so far, inasmuch as Lady Stanley of Alderley had intimated her objection to this kind of irregular religious service; and that, being her Ladyship's tenant, and fearing ejectment, he had resolved not to open his house further for the preaching. Mr. Brocklehurst however went at the usual time, and finding that several persons had assembled, probably not knowing of the interdict or of the resolve come to, said to the farmer, "Did Lady Stanley object to our singing?" "O no, she said nothing about that." "Then let us sing a hymn." When the singing was over, Mr. Brocklehurst asked, "Did her Ladyship forbid us praying?" "That was not mentioned." "Then let us pray." After prayer the inquiry was made, "Did Lady Stanley object to the reading of the Holy Scriptures?" "She did not refer to that." "Then let us read for our instruction the lessons appointed for the day." After reading, Mr. Brocklehurst said, "Had not Lady Stanley interdicted preaching, I should have endeavoured to expound this chapter, and might have said thus." He then briefly explained and applied the passage of Sacred Writ, and concluded the service by pronouncing the Benediction.

The following day Mr. Brocklehurst rode over to Alderley, and succeeded in obtaining an interview with Lady Stanley. Just as he expected, he found that, as in numberless instances, there was an entire misapprehension on the part of her Ladyship concerning the character and aims of the Methodists. Explanations were made which were entirely satisfactory to her, and before he left the Hall he was assured that further inquiry should be made. The final result was

that directions were given that no hindrance should be placed in the way of the Methodists; and, after the lapse of some few years, a site was obtained, at the Hough, for the erection of a chapel.

In 1862 villas were rapidly rising in that charming locality. One or two influential Wesleyan families had gone to reside there, and it was thought best that an effort should be made to place an attractive chapel in the vicinity. This was eventually done. One result of this effort was that a division of the Circuit, which had long seemed desirable, was effected. In 1864, the Alderley Edge and Knutsford Circuit was formed, including those two places, with Mobberley, Snelson, Warford and Mottram.

In 1866 a small chapel was built at Walker Barn, in the raising of which the brothers Shaw, who had during many years endeavoured to promote the cause of Christ, took a leading part. No house of prayer had previously been erected there, nor was there any within a considerable distance. On the hills between Macclesfield and Buxton the population is scanty, yet was it exceedingly desirable that the Gospel should be preached in that region, and that the children should be taught the way of Life.

In 1871 a chapel, somewhat larger than that at Walker Barn, was opened at Allgreave. What has been said concerning the former applies to the latter: it was the first place of worship ever raised in the neighbourhood. In fact, without the employment of lay preachers the Gospel could not be taken to those solitary places. Honour be given to the men who will take on themselves toil and exposure that those who cannot, or will not, travel two or three miles to the parish church, or the nearest large chapel, may, within

a moderate distance from their homes, hear the wonderful works of God. Often do those devoted servants of Christ labour amid much discouragement and weariness, but their reward is certain, and will prove glorious and endless.

During the winter of 1871—72, the old chapel in Sunderland Street was renovated and improved. Various changes within and around the venerated structure had previously taken place; though its external appearance was unchanged, and may still fully satisfy, in its unadorned simplicity, the severest taste, and the most puritanical, that still survives among us. Green fields had, however, disappeared from the vicinity, and "Nicodemus' pew" only existed in the recollection of seniors. Fashion had exerted its subtile influence even within this sacred and unpretentious structure. Instead of "the gallery-stewards" having the monopoly of revenue in the chapel, the preference for sittings down stairs had long been declared. The pews, however, in the body of the chapel had, until the period just named, high and perpendicular backs: the human race, although ingenious, had to exist during many ages before it became generally understood that such backs to seats were not the most comfortable. But, towards the close of 1871, there was a general wish to improve the old chapel without interfering unnecessarily with its sacred associations. Difficulties were in the way, but Mr. Samuel Hill and Mr. J. Finney Bowers, with a few of their friends, undertook to overcome these difficulties, and did so. Ministers and others, who had resided in the Circuit during former years and who visited the place at the re-opening, were delighted to find the building, dear to them beyond expression, so greatly improved, yet still the Sunderland Street chapel

in which they had rejoiced to worship. A stout heart, and a willingness to work, with zeal for God and faith in God, will accomplish much. All honour to the men who possess and manifest such qualities.

On Wednesday, March 4th, 1874, the Memorial Stones of a new chapel were laid. A representation of this beautiful sanctuary is prefixed to this volume, and details connected therewith may be found in an Appendix.

Concerning the success vouchsafed to Methodism, in Macclesfield, and throughout the world, we bless our God with joyful lips. On behalf of Christ's Universal Church we devoutly pray:—"God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." (Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.) May we be found worthy to join those who once toiled for Christ, but now reign at His side.

APPENDIX.

IT HAS BEEN THOUGHT DESIRABLE TO THROW TOGETHER, IN AN APPENDIX, SEVERAL DOCUMENTS WHICH HAVE A SPECIAL INTEREST FOR THE METHODISTS OF MACCLESFIELD.

I.

A PLAN FOR THE MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT.

1798- 1799.

PREACHING-PLACES.	HOURS	JULY.			AUGUST.				SEPTEMBER.					OCTOBER.				NOVEMBER.				DECEMBER.					JANUARY.		
		15	22	29	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20
Macclesf'd Forest & Clough	10, 2		7		11		17		3		5		10		16		18		15		6		12		15		17		16
Lower Eyres . . .	8, 5½	1	6	L	2	M	10		5	3	P	1	4	8	14		L	M	6	3	11	5		P	1		10		
Sithington & Withington	10, 4	12		7		8		P		13		17		3		10		12		W		P		9		10		W	
Alderley Cross, etc. .	1, 3	P		6		3		17		7		P		12		5		10		17		W		10		12		P	
Langley & Gawsworth .	10, 4	9		3		7		10		9		6		17		3		7		12		10		17		9		3	
Broken Cross . . .	3, 7		3		4		9		7		12		17		12		10		9		5		7		17		3		10
Shrigley & Booth Green	9, 1	10		8		5		4		6		13		15		9		11		10		13		5		6		15	
Bollington & Limah .	9½	3		5		11		6		12		10		7		13		17		11		9		7		13		6	
Rainow	4	13		15		10		5		11		12		6		13		3		7		17		11		7		5	
Kettleshulme . . .	12½, 4	11		12		17		2		4		IB		9		6		5		18		IH		8		4		13	
Flatt & Whaley . .	10, 4	8		4		6		13		15		11		10		8		18		16		11		4		IH		8	
Chinley & Chapel . .	9, 1		2		10		13		6		2		IH		8		11		13		10		4		11		IH		8
Buxton	2, 6½		4		3		6		13		10		8		11		2		14		4		5		6		13		2
Sparrow Pit & Tideswell	10, 1½		18		19		4		10		8		13		6		16		18		2		19		13		6		IH
Edale	9, 1		8		14		18		4		14		6		19		8		4		14		IH		8		14		4
Flagg & Chalmorton .	10, 1½	18		19		14		16		2		8		18		19		14		2		16		18		19		14	
Forest & Dovecholes .	12½, 4		15		5		14		19		16		2		15		14		IH		8		18		4		19		14
Prestbury . . .	6		10		8		3		17		5		12		10		3		7		17		10		3		12		7

PREACHERS' NAMES.

1. Geo. Shadford.
2. John Brandreth.
3. Ralph Burgess.
4. John Goddard.
5. John Goodfellow.
6. Geo Brocklehurst.
7. Richard Salt.
8. James Harrop.
9. James Lean.
10. Thos. Allen.
11. William Boothby.
12. Thos. Gregory.
13. George Lomas.
14. John Tinker.
15. Thos. Needham.
16. Samuel Bagshaw.
17. John Birchenall.
18. Josh. Mycock.
19. Robt. Burgess.

I.—*continued.*

A CLASS PAPER, with the Leader's observations concerning the Members.

STATE.	MONTH / DAY	STATION.		Q. D.	YEARLY SUBS.
	S. Mitchell		*Faint, yet pursuing.*		
	M. Palfryman		*Is sincere, but fears death.*		
	H. Yates		*Can say, I know I am a child of God.*		
	E. Smallwood		*Can read her title clear.*		
	H. Ball		*Can say, my Saviour is mine, and I am His.*		
	O. Ball		*Timid, doubting, but sincere.*		
	S. Yates		*Has felt her need of a Saviour.*		
	M. Beaumont		*Seeking, I hope, diligently.*		
	M. Bailey		*In great distress, both spiritual and temporal.*		
	M. Martin		*Is seeking the Saviour through persecution.*		

Lord,
Wilt Thou no longer me excuse,
And wilt Thou frown if I refuse?
O Let me have Thy presence still,
And I'll submit to all Thy will.
Fear not!

II.

A PLAN OF THE LOCAL PREACHERS IN THE MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT, 1803.

PLACES.	JULY	AUGUST.				SEPTEMBER.				OCTOBER.			HOURS
1803. SUNDAYS	28	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	
Kettleshulme		5		11		7		1		3		13		1, 4
Chinley and Chapel	3		5		8		12		13		3		11	9, 1
Forest & Sparrow Pit	13		s		11		s		8		s		13	1, 3½
Flatt and Doveholes	11		12		5		2		7		8		12	10, 4
Edale		8		13		12		11		8		7		9, 1
Whalley		11		7		5		13		11		8		4
Shrigley & Booth Green		1		9		2		6		5		3		9, 1
Bollington and Lima		6		5		3		9		7		1		9, 12½
Forest and Rainow		7		3		9		s s 2		6		5		1, 4
Linda	w		1		6		w		1		9		w	2
Peover	1		w		c		6		c		w		c	2
Gawsworth and Broken Cross	s s 2		6		3 9		1		s s 2		6		5	4, 7
Bosley		s s		6		1		s s		1		6		3
Macclesfield		1 3	6 9											

1. Thomas Allen.
2. Ralph Burgess.
3. Geo. Brocklehurst.
4. John Boothby.
5. William Boothby.
6. John Birchenall.
7. John Haslan.
8. John Goddard.
9. James Lean.
10.
11. Robert Walker.
12. John Harrop.
13. Robert Marshall.

W. Whitehead.
S. Sheffield.
SS. S. Shaw.
C. Congleton.

BAYLEY, PRINTER.

In reference to this Plan, it may be stated that the Macclesfield Circuit was still regarded as contiguous to Sheffield, and received aid from the Sheffield Local Preachers; and, most likely, rendered similar aid to Sheffield, as well as to Congleton.

For economical reasons, the dates were filled up by the pen, so that the printed form might serve for more than one quarter.

The Travelling Preachers' names and work are not found on this plan. They must have had a separate one at this period.

III.

A Circuit Plan, belonging to the early part of 1821, furnishes names of places and preachers, which serve to show how the extent of the Circuit had been circumscribed, and how fresh places had been opened and new labourers raised up.

PLAN OF THE MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT, 1821.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God."

Places.		Preachers' Names.
Macclesfield	1	John Davis.
Linda and Knutsford	2	Joseph Roberts.
Bollington and Rainow	3	Thomas Allen.
Bollington	4	John Birchenall.
Rainow	5	Francis Swindells.
Whiteley Green and Wood End	6	George Walker.
Hooley Hey	7	John Henshall.
Broken Cross	8	Samuel Pickering.
Prestbury	9	Ralph Goodwin.
Gawsworth	10	George Whitehead.
Hurdsfield	11	Peter Bradbury.
Langley and Lane-Ends	12	Thomas Birtles.
Bosley and Turk's-Head	13	Joseph Allcock.
Knutsford	14	John Goodfellow.
Linda and Warford	15	John Mayer.
Cashes and Mobberley	16	William Leigh.
Peover	17	George Whitaker.
Lower Peover	18	James Higginbotham.
		Exhorters.
Titherington	H	Jessey Holland.
	S	James Sargent.
	B	Samuel Ball.

IV.

PLAN OF THE METHODIST PREACHERS

ON THE

MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT, 1836.

PLACES OF PREACHING.	TIME.
SUNDERLAND STREET CHAPEL	10, 6
Monday (after date)	7
Friday, ditto, Prayer Meeting	8
BRUNSWICK CHAPEL	10½, 6
Ditto	2½
Wednesday (after date)	7½
Saturday, Prayer Meeting	8
BOLLINGTON CHAPEL	10½
Ditto	6
Monday (after date)	7½
RAINOW CHAPEL	2
Ditto	6
Wednesday (after date)	6½
PRESTBURY CHAPEL	2, 6
Thursday (after date)	7
LANGLEY CHAPEL	2½
Ditto	6
Monday (after date)	7
BROKEN CROSS CHAPEL	2
KNUTSFORD CHAPEL	2½
Ditto	6
Monday (after date)	7
Ditto, Cross Town	7
SNELSON CHAPEL	10½
Ditto	2
LINDA END	10
Ditto	2
WARFORD	5
MOBBERLEY	2, 7
KERRIDGE	2½
Tuesday (after date)	7
HURDSFIELD	6
Tuesday (after date)	7
BOSLEY BROOKS	2½
Wednesday (after date)	7
LANE END	6
Thursday (after date	7
HOLLIN-LANE and TURK'S HEAD	2, 6
Thursday (after date)	7
MEGLANE	6½
GAWSWORTH	0
Wednesday (after date)	6
HIGHER TITHERINGTON	2½
Tuesday (after date)	7
LOWER TITHERINGTON	2½
Tuesday (after date)	7
WOODHOUSE END	6½
Friday (after date)	7
JEPSON'S CLOUGH	2
Newton Heath	2
Whiteley Green	6½
Billinge Head	6½
CROOKED YARD (Wednes. after date)	7
Workhouse	8
Lower Houses	2½
Lower Forest	6½
WILDBOAR CLOUGH (Buxton Circuit)	2

PREACHERS.
1. B. Slater, Allen House.
2. G. H. Rowe, Allen House.
3. J. Rattenbury, Sunderland Street.
4. J. Hughes, Knutsford.
5. T. Allen, Fountain Street East.
6. G. Walker, Lord Street.
7. J. Henshaw, Great King Street.
8. R. Rider, Lord Street.
9. J. Holland, Lord Street.
10. J. Sargent, Mill Street.
11. S. Ball, Mill Street.
12. M. Swindells, Pott Hall.
13. G. Willmott, Bollington.
14. F. Bowers, Mill Street.
15. C. Garner, Waters Green.
16. J. Barclay, Statham Street.
17. W. Shatwell, Parsonage Street.
18. S. Bowcock, Nixon's Yard.
19. G. Sharpley, Church Wall-gate.
20. J. Shaw, Bosley.
21. J. Harrop, Bollington
22. M. Longden, Rainow.
23. R. Walters, Ingersley Clough.
24. J. Birchenall, Hurdsfield.
25. J. S. Bailey, Ridge Hill.
26. R. Ainsworth, Rainow.
27. J. Chadwick, Langley.
28. J. Redfern, Lane-end.
29. W. Henshall, Bollington.
30. R. Eaton, Langley.
31. W. Bancroft, Bollington.
32. T. Brocklehurst, Macclesfield.
33. J. Green, Mobberley.
34. T. Williams, Mobberley.
35. J. Ray, Mill Street.
36. D. Coe, Bollington.
37. W. Jackson, Knutsford.
38. E. Asheroft, Snelson.
39. J. Davenport, Sutton.
40. R. Boothby, Hurdsfield.
ON TRIAL.
41. N. Shaw, Hollin Lane.
42. J. Beech, Knutsford.
43. W. Williams, Mobberley.
44. J. Willmott, Bollington.
45. J. Stubbs, Knutsford.

V.

At the Centenary Commemoration, 1839, the noble sum of £221,939 4s. 4d. was raised by the Methodists and their friends for sacred purposes. The list of Subscribers for the Macclesfield Circuit contains the names of many who have since passed into the eternal world. To descendants and others it may prove interesting.

Macclesfield Circuit.

Thomas Allen, Esq., *Treasurer.*
Mr. James Sargent, *Secretary.*

	£	s.	d.
Strachan, Rev. A. and family	10	10	0
Holgate, Rev. Israel	10	10	0
Smith, Rev. J. S.	10	10	0

Macclesfield.

	£	s.	d.
Allen, Thomas, Esq.	105	0	0
Allen, Mrs.	52	10	0
Allen, Thomas, junior	52	10	0
Backhouse, Mr.	1	0	0
Backhouse, Mrs.	1	0	0
For children	1	0	0
Barton, Mr. James	2	2	0
Beresford, Mr. and Mrs. A.	2	2	0
Bonsall, Mr. John	2	2	0
Bowers, Mr. Fynney	21	0	0
Braddock, Mr. W. and family	4	2	0
Brocklehurst, Mr. and family	15	15	0
Brunt, Mr. Joseph	0	10	0
Carr, Mr. and Mrs.	10	10	0
Clulow, Mr. John	19	5	0
Crooks, Mr. and Mrs.	10	10	0
Etchells, Miss	6	6	0
Etchells, Miss E.	6	6	0
Farren, Mrs.	1	1	0
Fleet, John, Esq. and Mrs.	5	5	0
Habgood, Mr. and family	5	5	0
Harrop, Miss M.	0	10	0
Higginbotham, Mr. W.	21	0	0
Hill, Mrs. and family	7	7	0
Lowndes, Mr. S.	1	1	0
Meek, Messrs. J. and R.	21	0	0
Osborne, Mrs. and family	5	5	0
Ray, Mr. Joseph and family	3	0	0
Ridgway, Mr. B.	1	1	0
Ridgway, Miss	1	0	0
Rowlinson, Mr. W.	1	0	0
Ryle, John, Esq.	105	0	0
Sargent, Mr. James and family	15	15	0
Shatwell, Mr.	5	5	0
Shillito, Miss	1	1	0
Smallwood, Mr. J. W. and Mrs.	10	10	0
In memory of parents	2	2	0
In memory of grandfather, Mr. G. Pearson	1	1	0
In memory of sisters	1	1	0
Smallwood, Miss Catherine	1	1	0
Smallwood, Master John	1	1	0
Smallwood, Miss Charlotte	1	1	0
Smith, Mr. James and family	26	5	0
Smith, Mrs. Mary	0	10	0
Thompson, Mr. James	5	5	0
Thorley, Mr. Joshua	52	10	0
In memory of his sister, Mrs Slater	5	5	0
In memory of Mr. J. Thorley	1	1	0
In memory of G. Cooke and J. Wardle	2	2	0
Walker, Mrs., of Birtles	5	5	0
Wood, Mr. Samuel	5	5	0
Wood, Mrs.	5	5	0
Wood, Miss	1	1	0
Wood, Henry	1	1	0
Wood, William B.	1	1	0
Wood, Samuel	1	1	0
Small sums and Collection	11	6	5

Bollington.

	£	s.	d.
Ainsworth, Miss E.	0	10	0
Brooke, Joseph, Esq.	105	0	0
Brooke, Mrs.	105	0	0
Brooke, Master John	42	0	0
Brooke, Master Joseph	31	10	0
Brooke, Mr. and his sisters, in memory of parents, late of Leeds	52	10	0
Clarke, Mr. Edward	0	10	0
Fern, Mr. Matthew	0	10	0
Holland, Mr. John and family	2	2	0
Knowles, Miss H.	0	10	0
Oldham, Mr. George	0	10	0

	£	s.	d.
Oliver, Thomas, Esq.	105	0	0
Oliver, Mrs.	52	10	0
Oliver, Miss	36	15	0
Oliver, Master Thomas	36	15	0
Oliver, Master W. C. L.	31	10	0
In memory of deceased relatives	5	0	0
Shaw, Mr. W.	0	10	0
Swindells, Martin, Esq.	262	10	0
Swindells, Mrs.	105	0	0
Swindells, Martin, junior, Esq.	105	0	0
Swindells, Mrs. M. junior	105	0	0
Swindells, Master	31	10	0
Swindells, Mr. George	52	10	0
Swindells, Miss	31	10	0
Sumner, Mrs.	52	10	0
Sumner, Master George	21	0	0
Swindells, M., Esq., in memory of the late Miss S.	52	10	0
Swindells, Mrs., in memory of her mother, Mrs. Shepley	52	10	0
Watts, Mr. Joseph and family	14	14	0
Wilmot, Messrs. George and John	3	3	0
Small sums and Collection	12	7	6

RAINOW.

Beard, Mr. P. and daughter	1	0	0
Bradbury, Mr. D.	0	10	0
Broadhead, Mr. Thomas	5	5	0
Clarke, Mr. Thomas	1	1	0
Clarke, Mr. William	1	1	0
Etchells, Mr. and Mrs. M.	1	0	0
Friend, A	1	1	0
Goodwin, Mr. and Mrs. A.	1	0	0
Handford, Mr. Samuel	1	0	0
Harrop, Mr. Thomas	1	10	0
Livesey, Mr. John, and Mr. John, junior	5	5	0
Longden, Mr. Matthew	1	11	6
Mellor, Mr. John	21	0	0
Nixon, Mr.	1	0	0
Ollerenshaw, Mrs. and family	5	5	0
Robinson, Mr. John	5	5	0
Willot, Mr. W., senior	5	0	0
Collection	0	18	0

KNUTSFORD AND SNELSON.

Alcock, Mr. and Mrs.	2	15	0
Buckley, Mr. P.	1	11	0
Burrows, the Misses	11	1	0
Gibson, Mr. W.	1	1	0
Gregory, Mr. James	0	15	0
Hughes, Mrs, in memory of Miss Podmore	1	1	0
Hurley, Mr. H.	0	10	0
Kinder, Mr. and Mrs.	4	0	0
Robinson, Mr. Thomas	10	10	0
Shatwell, Mrs.	5	5	0
Wright, Mrs. and family	16	16	0
Collections and small sums	4	0	6

LANGLEY.

Bailey, Mr. and Mrs Joseph.	2	2	0
Pimm, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas	1	0	0
Smith, Mr. William	5	0	0
Collections	0	16	3

Total in the Circuit . . . £2,348 19s. 2d.

To "the Relief and Extension Fund," in 1853-1857, the Macclesfield Circuit contributed . . . £836 10 11

And to the "Jubilee Fund," in 1863-1868, the sum of . £726 19 1

But not a few of the donors in these latter cases happily survive, and might not be pleased with any special announcement of their gifts.

VI.

NAMES OF THE WESLEYAN-METHODIST MINISTERS,

WHO HAVE BEEN

STATIONED IN MACCLESFIELD SINCE 1770 TO 1874;

WITH THOSE OF SOME WHO STATEDLY VISITED MACCLESFIELD BEFORE IT WAS MADE THE HEAD OF A CIRCUIT.

Lancashire (or Manchester) Circuit.

1765. James Oddie, John Oliver, John Murray, Isaac Waldron.
1766. John Pawson, Peter Jaco, Paul Greenwood, John Allen.
1767. John Pawson, John Whitehead, John Poole, William Frigill.

Lancashire, South (or Manchester) Circuit.

1768. Alexander Mather, J. Standring.
1769. Alexander Mather, R. Costerdine, George Storey.

Cheshire, South (or Macclesfield) Circuit.

1770. Robert Costerdine, William Linnell.

Macclesfield Circuit.

1771. John Shaw, Samuel Smith, Thos. Tatton.
1772. Samuel Woodcock, David Evans, John Bristol.
1773. Thos. Hanson, Thos. Westell, Samuel Bardsley.
1774. Thos. Hanson, John Poole, William Percival.
1775. Duncan Wright, John Poole, William Percival.
1776. Duncan Wright, Thomas Hanby, James Hall.
1777. John Shaw, Jasper Robinson, Thomas Hanby.
1778. John Shaw, Nicholas Manners, Jeremiah Brettell.
1779. John Brettell, Jeremiah Brettell, Robert Heyward.
1780. Robert Roberts, Robt. Costerdine, Thos. Corbett.
1781. Robert Roberts, John Hampson, Jun., John Leech; Richard Seed, Supernumerary.
1782. James Rogers, Christopher Peacock, Wm. Myles. William Simpson.
1783. James Rogers, Samuel Bardsley.

Burslem Circuit, divided from Macclesfield.

1784. Joseph Bradford, William Percival.
1785. Joseph Bradford, Thomas Dixon.
1786. George Story, William Thoresby.
1787. George Story, Thomas Smith.
1788. John Allen, John Tregortha, George Highfield.
1789. John Allen, Samuel Gates, Robert Lomas.
1790. Andrew Inglis, George Shadford, Wm. Dufton.
1791. John Goodwin, John Denton, John Furness; George Shadford, Supernumerary.
1792. John Goodwin, Geo. Lowe, Charles Tunnicliffe; George Shadford, Supernumerary.
1793. John Mason, George Highfield, George Lowe; George Shadford, Supernumerary.
1794. John Mason, George Highfield, Samuel Bardsley.
1795. George Snowden, John Booth, Robt. Crowther.
1796. George Snowden, Miles Martindale, Thos. Greaves.
1797. Richard Reece, Miles Martindale, J. Knowles; Thomas Greaves, Supernumerary.
1798. Richard Reece, George Marsden, James Townley.
1799. Jeremiah Brettell, Geo. Marsden, John Heywood.
1800. J. Brettell, Thomas Hutton, Cuthbert Whiteside.

N.B.—Several Societies given to the Leek Circuit.

1801. Jeremiah Brettell, Thomas Hutton, Jabez Bunting; George Lowe, Supernumerary.
1802. Joseph Entwisle, George Morley, Jabez Bunting.
1803. J. Entwisle, George Morley, James Needham.

N.B.—Congleton, divided from Macclesfield.

1804. Joseph Bradford, John Riles.
1805. Joseph Bradford, John Riles, William France.
1806. Samuel Taylor, Theophilus Lessey, Jas. D. Burton.
1807. Samuel Taylor, Theophilus Lessey, John Hanwell.
1808. John Braithwaite, Charles Gloyne, William Hill; George Snowden, Supernumerary.
1809. John Braithwaite, Chas. Gloyne, John Wheelhouse.
1810. Robert Smith, Samuel Warren, Charles Burton.
1811. Robert Smith, Samuel Warren, Charles Burton.
1812. Robert Miller, James Townley, John Hughes.
1813. Robert Miller, James Townley.

Buxton, divided from Macclesfield.

1814. James Townley, John James, John Rigg.
1815. Jonathan Barker, John James, John Bowers.
1816. Jonathan Barker, James Gill.
1817. James Gill, John Chettle.
1818. John Stamp, John Chettle.
1819. John Stamp, John Davies.
1820. John Davies, Joseph Roberts.
1821. Cleland Kirkpatrick, Joseph Roberts.
1822. C. Kirkpatrick, J. Roberts; J. Beaumont, Supernumerary.
1823. William Naylor, Isaac Keeling.
1824. William Naylor, Isaac Keeling, Walter Hussey.
1825. William Naylor, Isaac Keeling, Thomas Dickin.
1826. Robert Pilter, Joseph Dunning, Geo. Chambers.
1827. Robert Pilter, Joseph Dunning, Geo. Chambers.
1828. Robert Pilter, John Walsh, W. O. Booth.
1829. Alexander Bell, John Walsh, W. O. Booth.
1830. Alexander Bell, John Walsh, W. O. Booth.
1831. Alexander Bell, Thomas Moss, John Farrar.
1832. Elijah Morgan, Thomas Moss, John Farrar.
1833. Elijah Morgan, Thomas Moss, John Farrar.
1834. Elijah Morgan, G. H. Rowe, John Rattenbury.
1835. Barnard Slater, G. H. Rowe, John Rattenbury.
1836. Barnard Slater, G. H. Rowe, John Rattenbury.
1837. Barnard Slater, Alexander Strachan, Israel Holgate, George Greenwood.
1838. Alex. Strachan, Israel Holgate, Jacob S. Smith; John Hughes, Supernumerary.
1839. Alex. Strachan, Israel Holgate, Jacob S. Smith.
1840. William Bird, Jacob S. Smith, John Lambert.
1841. Wm. Bird, Robert Jackson, John Lambert; John Hughes, Joseph Meek, Supernumeraries.
1842. Joseph Roberts, Robert Jackson, John Lambert.
1843. Robert Jackson, Thomas Hardy, Charles Clay.
1844. Thomas Harris, Thomas Hardy, Charles Clay.
1845. Thomas Harris, Thomas Hardy, Charles Clay.
1846. Thos. Harris, Peter C. Horton, Fred. F. Woolley.
1847. Corbett Cooke, Peter C. Horton, F. F. Woolley.
1848. Corbett Cooke, P. C. Horton, F. F. Woolley, Joseph Mood.
1849. Corbett Cooke, Nehemiah Curnock, William R. Rogers, Joseph Mood.
1850. Alexander Bell, N. Curnock, W. R. Rogers, Jos. Mood; Barnard Slater, Supernumerary.

1851. John Rigg, N. Curnock, W. R. Rogers, Thos. S. Bowers, B.A.; Barnard Slater, Supernumerary.
1852. John Rigg, Samuel Walker, W. T. Radcliffe, T. S. Bowers, B.A.; Edward Collier, Supernumerary.
1853. John Rigg, S. Walker, W. T. Radcliffe, G. C. Taylor.
1854. William Burt, Samuel Walker, W. T. Radcliffe, G. C. Taylor.
1855. W. Burt, John Moore Kirk, G. C. Taylor, J. L. Ball; John Rigg, Supernumerary.
1856. W. Burt, J. M. Kirk, Thomas Kent, J. L. Ball; John Rigg, Supernumerary.
1857. Willson Brailsford, Thomas Kent, Joseph L. Ball, J. A. Armstrong; W. Williams, Supernumerary.
1858. Willson Brailsford, Thomas Kent, Edward Jones, John A. Armstrong; W. Williams, Supernumerary.
1859. Willson Brailsford, Edward Jones, John S. Jones, J. A. Armstrong; W. Williams, Supernumerary.
1860. Wm. Hurt, E. Jones, Benjamin Frankland, B.A., Alfred J. French, B.A.; W. Williams, Supernumerary.
1861. Wm. Hurt, Wm. R. Williams, B. Frankland, B.A., Alfred J. French, B.A.; W. Williams, Supernumerary.
1862. Wm. Hurt, Wm. R. Williams, B. Frankland, B.A., Alfred J. French, B.A.; W. Williams, Supernumerary.
1863. Samuel Simpson, William R. Williams, Anthony Ward, James J. Wray, Charles W. Prest; W. Williams, Supernumerary.
1864. Samuel Simpson, John G. Cox, A. Ward; Ed. Collier, Super.

N.B.—Alderley Edge and Knutsford Circuit formed this year.

1865. Samuel Simpson, John G. Cox, Anthony Ward.
1866. George Scott, D.D., John G. Cox, Herbert Hoare.
1867. George Scott, D.D., Samuel Wilkinson, Herbert Hoare, S. J. P. Dunman.
1868. George Scott, D.D., Samuel Wilkinson, Herbert Hoare.
1869. Samuel Wilkinson, John Eglinton, James Nicholson.
1870. John Eglinton, Benjamin Smith (A), James Nicholson.
1871. John Eglinton, Benjamin Smith (A), James Nicholson.
1872. Michael Johnson, Benjamin Smith (A), Joseph Adams.
1873. Michael Johnson, Thomas Wilkes, W. W. Walton.
1874. Michael Johnson, Thomas Wilkes, John Emberton, W. W. Walton.

VII.

MACCLESFIELD CIRCUIT, 1873.

Places.	Time. M.	A.	E.	Preachers.
Sunderland Street	10½	—	6½	1. Rev. M. Johnson, Allen House.
Mill Street School	—	3	—	2. Rev. B. Smith, Bollington.
Mill Street Day School				3. Rev. J. Adams, Allen House
Monday	—	—	7	4. Mr. S. Ball, Lower Exchange Street.
Friday, Prayer Meeting	—	—	7½	
Saturday, Band Meeting	—	—	7½	
Brunswick	10½	—	6	5. Mr. J. Shaw, Bosley.
Centenary School	—	3	—	6. Mr. J. Birchenall, Park St.
Wednesday	—	—	7	7. Mr. J. Redfern, Lane Ends.
Bollington	10½	—	6	8. Mr. N. Shaw, Walker Barn.
Sabbath School	—	3	—	9. Mr. H. B. Broadhead, Hurdsfield.
Wednesday	—	—	7	
Saturday, Prayer Meeting	—	—	7	10. Mr. J. Chantler, West Bond Street. [Sutton.
Rainow	—	2½	6½	
Wednesday	—	—	7	11. Mr. T. Ardern, High Street,
Langley	—	2½	6	12. Mr. J. Whittaker, Gawsworth. [bury.
Monday	—	—	7	
Broken Cross	—	2½	6½	13. Mr. J. Hepplestone, Prest-
Tuesday	—	—	7	14. Mr. W. Longdon, Rainow.
Prestbury	—	2½	6½	15. Mr. J. S. Redfern, Hollin Lane.
Thursday	—	—	7	
Bosley Brooks	—	2	6½	16. Mr. W. Henshall, Bollington
Thursday	—	—	7	17. Mr. J. Crowder, 50, Chester Road. [Street.
Hollin Lane	—	2	6½	
Wednesday	—	—	7	18. Mr. J. Broadhead, 17, Park
Henbury	—	—	6½	19. Mr. J. Needham, Broken Cross.
Friday	—	—	7	
Woodhouse End	—	—	6½	20. Mr. M. Davenport, Bosley.
Thursday	—	—	7	21. Mr. H. W. Coe, Bollington.
Gawsworth	—	—	6½	22. Mr. J. Broadhead, Rainow.
Thursday	—	—	7	23. Mr. J. Rathbone, Woodhouse End.
Lane Ends	—	—	6½	
Monday	—	—	7	24. Mr. G. Gosling, Bollington.
Wincle	—	2	—	25. Mr. Edward Weaver, Buxton Road.
Friday	—	3	—	
Allgreave	—	2½	6½	26. Mr. S. Bradburn, Prestbury Road.
Friday	—	—	7	
Meg Lane	—	—	6½	27. Mr. C. Lunt, Prestbury Rd.
Monday	—	—	7	28. Mr. J. Day, Allgreave.
Kerridge	—	2¾	—	29. Mr. J. Mellor, 116, Great King Street.
	—	6¼	—	
Tuesday	—	—	7	30. Mr. T. Clarke, Rainow.
Lower House	—	3	—	31. Mr. J. Rogers, 90, Great King Street.
Thursday	—	—	7	
Shrigley	—	—	6½	32. Mr. J. Dudson, Kerridge.
Monday	—	—	7	33. Mr. J. Gee, Bollington.
Fallibroom	—	—	6½	34. Mr. J. B. Thornley, Sutton.
Friday	—	—	7	36. Mr. A. Scott, Ingersley Mills.
Walker Barn	—	2½	6½	37. Mr. F. Turner, Bollington.
Friday	—	—	7	
Chestergate (94)	—	—	6	
Tuesday	—	—	7	
Saltersford	—	—	6½	ON TRIAL.
Macclesfield Sabbath School	11	—	—	38. Mr. J. Johnson, Bollington.
Hurdsfield Sabbath School	—	3	—	39. Mr. J. Bradburn, Prestbury Road.

VII.—(*Continued.*)

Places.	Leaders.	Places.	Leaders.
Macclesfield .	Hall and Stevenson.	Bollington . .	Wright.
,, . .	Hall, R. B.	,, . .	Oldham, D.
,, . .	Spencer.	,, . .	Coe, H. W.
,, . .	Mellor, J.	,, . .	Allman, W.
,, . .	Thompson, J.	,, . .	Henshall and Longbottom.
,, . .	Turner, H.	,, . .	File, C.
,, . .	Pennie.	,, . .	Allman, T. and Orme.
,, . .	Brunt, J.	,, . .	Hatton (Sis).
,, . .	Broadhead, H. B.	,, . .	Minister's and Swindells.
,, . .	Turner, H.	,, . .	Oliver, W. C. L.
,, . .	Bingham, H.	Rainow . . .	Barber.
,, . .	Ball.	,, . . .	Bradbury and Cooper.
,, . .	Hall.	,, . . .	Longden.
,, . .	Lunt, C.	Langley . .	Wardle.
,, . .	Staghall, J. B.	,, . . .	Steele.
,, . .	Hudson, W.	Broken Cross .	Acton and Bradburn.
,, . .	Lees, J.	Prestbury . .	Hepplestone.
,, . .	Cox, G.	Bosley Brooks .	Shaw.
,, . .	Wood.	Hollin Lane .	Redfern.
,, . .	Johnson (Sis).	Henbury . .	Wright, J.
,, . .	Hudson, W.	Woodhouse End .	Rathbone.
,, . .	Weaver, E.	Gawsworth . .	Whittaker.
,, . .	Birchenall, J.	Lane Ends . .	Redfern.
,, . .	Weaver.	Wincle . . .	Day, J.
,, . .	Mills.	Allgreave . .	Wheelton.
,, . .	Staghall, W. B.	Meg Lane . .	Steele.
,, . .	Barlow (Sis).	Kerridge . .	Watson and Clarke.
,, . .	Blackburn.	Lower House .	Oldham.
,, . .	Minister's.	Shrigley . .	Bennett.
,, . .	Birchenall (Sis).	Fallibroom . .	Shaw.
,, . .	Broadhead, J. and Ardern.	Walker Barn .	Shaw, J. and N.
,, . .	Swindells, J.		
,, . .	Mellor, J.		
,, . .	Holland, D.		
Bollington . .	Allman, W. and Pilsbury.		

Circuit Stewards. { John Meek: who is also a General Treasurer of the Schools Fund.
Thomas Oliver: who is also District Treasurer of the Worn-Out Ministers' Fund.

W. C. L. Oliver, *District Treasurer of Missions.*

VIII.

TRINITY CHAPEL, 1874.

Wednesday, March 4th, 1874, was a red-letter day in the history of Wesleyan Methodism in Macclesfield. More than two thousand persons formed a procession, headed by the band—the principal officers and members of the Society and congregations, as also the officers, teachers, and scholars of the Day and Sunday Schools—and in about half an hour arrived at the site of the New Chapel in Cumberland Street, near the Park. Memorial-stones were laid by the Rev. M. Johnson, Superintendent of the Circuit, and Chairman of the District, Mrs. Carr (Mayoress), Mrs. Holland, Mrs. J. Meek, Mrs. John Birchenough, Mr. T. Collier, Mr. D. Holland, Mr. T. Oliver, Mr. T. Barker, Master A. P. Oliver (on behalf of Mr. J. L. Barker), and Mr. W. C. L. Oliver. In addition to the Superintendent, who gave an address on the occasion, the Revs. Thomas Wilkes, W. W. Walton, B. Smith (A), and other ministers and gentlemen took part in the proceedings. The utmost order was observed, and great interest and enthusiasm were displayed. About the same number afterwards took tea in the Drill-hall. The evening meeting in the Drill-hall, which was crowded to excess, was presided over by the Chairman of the District, and effectively addressed by the Revs. W. Sinden, Vicar of St. Peter's church, G. B. Kidd, B. Smith (A), T. Wilkes, J. F. Goodall, C. W. Prest and others. The chapel, with tower and spire, is estimated to cost eight thousand pounds, nearly five thousand of which have been already promised, We note the following sums as having been contributed :—

	£	s.	d.
Mr. David Holland . .	1000	0	0
Messrs. Oliver . . .	600	0	0
Mr. John Meek . . .	500	0	0
Messrs. J. and T. Brocklehurst. . . .	100	0	0
Mr. John Birchenough .	100	0	0
,, Thomas Collier . .	100	0	0
,, Thomas Barker . .	100	0	0
,, Bowers . . .	100	0	0
Mr. Thomas Johnson .	100	0	0
,, Joseph Johnson . .	100	0	0
,, George Cox . .	100	0	0
Rev. M. Johnson . .	50	0	0
Messrs. J. W. Smallwood and Son . . .	50	0	0
Messrs. J. and Joseph Brunt . . .	50	0	0
Mr. Joseph Sigley . .	50	0	0

VIII.—(*Continued*).

	£	s.	d.
Mr. Henry Boston	50	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. R. Proctor	40	0	0
,, ,, Joseph Rogers	40	0	0
Mr. Thomas Birchenough and Son	31	10	0
Mr. and Mrs. Israel Rowson	30	0	0
,, ,, Bullock	25	0	0
Dr. Birchenall	21	0	0
Mr. Mellor	20	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Gent	20	0	0
Mr. William Oliver	20	0	0
,, John F. Bowers, Jun.	20	0	0
,, William Clulow	20	0	0
Mrs. Prichard	20	0	0
Mr. Jonathan Smale	20	0	0
Messrs. Robinson	20	0	0
Mr. W. B. Staghall	20	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Hall	15	15	0
Mr. Brocklehurst	10	10	0
Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Malburn	10	10	0
Mr. Maurice	10	10	0
,, Thomas Hulme	10	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Barlow	10	0	0
Mr. Samuel Swindells	10	0	0
,, John B. Swindells	10	0	0
Mrs. Brunt	10	0	0
Mr. Samuel Wood	10	0	0
,, H. (a thank-offering)	10	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Hudson	10	0	0
Brocklehurst Brothers	10	0	0
Mr. Alderman J. Jackson	10	0	0
,, Samuel Hill	10	0	0
,, Stevenson	10	0	0
,, Henry Turner	10	0	0
Mrs. Mellor	10	0	0
Mr. John Mellor	10	0	0
,, William Henshall	10	0	0
,, S. Ackroyd	10	0	0
,, Samuel Walton	10	0	0
Mrs. and Miss Walton	7	0	0
Mrs. Sherwin	6	6	0
Mr. James Dawson	5	5	0
,, J. B. Staghall	5	0	0
,, C. W. Rowbotham	5	5	0
Mr. and Mrs. Wade	5	0	0
Mr. Thomas Stanway	5	5	0
,, Bradburn	5	0	0
,, Thomas Bailey (Mayor of Stockport)	5	0	0
Rev. Joseph Adams	5	0	0
Mr. George Barnsley	5	0	0
,, Charles Sinnett	5	0	0
,, Joseph Birchenough	5	0	0
,, J. T. Moore	5	0	0
,, F. Bousfield	5	0	0
,, Gaskell	5	0	0
,, Jabez Faulkner	5	0	0
Mr. John and Mrs. Broadhead	5	0	0
,, Edward Clarke (Ex-Mayor)	5	0	0
Mrs. Handforth	5	0	0
Mr. Hunter	5	0	0
,, Joseph J. Thompson	5	0	0
Mrs. Clulow	5	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Mair	5	0	0
Mrs. Gilbert	5	0	0
Mr. Peter Potts	5	0	0
Rev. B. Smith (A)	5	0	0
,, Thomas Wilkes	5	0	0
Mr. Millington	5	0	0
Mrs. Robinson	5	0	0
Mr. S. Adshead	5	0	0
,, Bain	5	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. File	5	0	0
Mr. Rowson	5	0	0
Miss Mellor	5	0	0
Sums under £5	75	12	4

Presented by the Ladies and Gentlemen who laid the Memorial Stones:—

Rev. M. Johnson	50	0	0
Mrs. Carr (Mayoress)	50	0	0
,, D. Holland	50	0	0
,, Meek	50	0	0
,, John Birchenough	50	0	0
Mr. T. Collier	50	0	0
,, D. Holland	50	0	0
,, T. Barker	50	0	0
,, J. L. Barker	50	0	0
,, Thomas Oliver	50	0	0
,, W. C. L. Oliver	50	0	0

Rev. W. B. and Mrs. Pope	10	0	0
Miss Helen L. Pope	5	0	0
In memory of two revered Fathers, Mr. Thomas Oliver and Mr. John Pope	20	0	0
Mrs. W. C. L. Oliver	10	0	0
Master Arthur P. Oliver	10	0	0
,, T. Creswick Oliver	10	0	0
Miss Alice Mildred Oliver	10	0	0
Master W. Lomas Oliver	10	0	0
Purses from Mill Street Sunday School	118	8	9
Purses from Centenary Sunday School	118	5	3
Collection on the Ground	43	18	3
Proceeds of Tea Meeting (in part)	20	0	0

VIII.—(*Continued.*)

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE TRUSTEES OF TRINITY CHAPEL:—

Mr. David Holland.
,, John Meek.
,, J. F. Bowers.
,, W. B. Staghall.
,, Joshua Sigley.
,, J. B. Smallwood.
,, Thomas Oliver.
,, John Mellor.
,, Israel Rowson.

Mr. J. Birchenall.
,, J. B. Swindells.
,, J. F. Bowers, jun.
,, W. T. Gent.
,, Henry Boston.
,, Samuel Wood.
,, Thomas Bullock.
,, William Oliver.
,, Robert Proctor.

C. O. Ellison, Esq., is the Architect, and Mr. Roylance the Contractor.

The Chapel is constructed to accommodate a thousand persons, allowing twenty inches to each person.

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